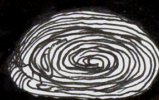
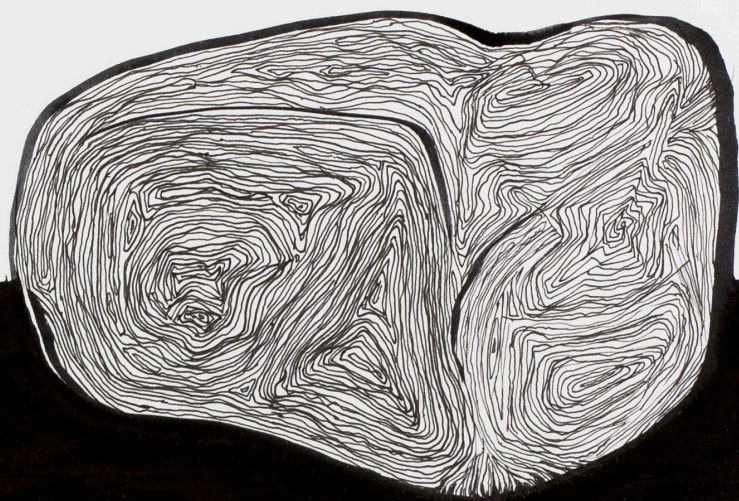


Sense of a Stone

Aleksi Jaakkola



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Master's Thesis in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture

Department of Art, Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture

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Abstract

Sense of a Stone investigates what the story behind the stone in Kullervo's Curse painting is. More particularly to create a narration to the stone. *Who is this stone? What does it have to say?*

To properly understand the stone, this thesis examines the stone within these contexts: as an art-object, a nature-object, and a stone-being. Only when all these aspects come together and are interpreted as a whole, the stone's story can be told.

The literature review focuses on analysing and interpreting material to find the story of the stone in context of history, symbolism, geology, the painting, painter and his process of making the painting. These interpretations of the aesthetical and cultural value of the stone, cannot give a comprehensive understanding of it. This is because it is also a stone-being, and as such it requires a first-hand experience to learn from the stone.

On four separate visits over a two year period, I engaged with the stone. The practice was guided by somaesthetics, where the body serves as a central tool in the fieldwork research. The process and interactions resulted in various forms of output such as field notes, drawings, and photographs. The practice and outputs thereof, intuitive or not, determined the path of the practice-based research process. The findings of the research generate a form of knowledge that only becomes known after interpretation. Then, in turn, this added knowledge provides further context for future practice affecting the outcomes thereof. Thus the process becomes a form of dialogue between the artist and the stone.

Nevertheless, each work can only become truly meaningful and understood in correlation with each other as a whole and within the context of the overall research. Therefore, it is understood that *Sense of a Stone* does not aim to create an object of art but rather is art as experience. This master's thesis is a documentation of the process which aspires to create a new narrative for the stone.

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Introduction

I was reading a book, *Know the Landscape*¹, when I came across two images presented next to each other. One was an image of Akseli Gallen-Kallela's painting *Kullervo's Curse* from 1899. The other was a photograph by Heikki Hanka titled *Kullervon Kivi (Kullervo's Stone)* from 2010. Given my fascination with both the Kalevala epics and stones, this juxtaposition intrigued me. Although I was well aware of the painting and its cultural value, I had not known about its connection to a natural object. *What is the story behind the stone in Kullervo's Curse? Why is the stone there? Should I take it and put it into a museum? Who is the stone?*

The stone has significance in different contexts. Therefore to fully comprehend the stone, it has to be examined within these contexts: as an art object, a nature-object, and a stone-being. Only when all these aspects have been interpreted together as a whole can the stone be properly understood and its story told.

I decided not to remove the stone from its environment, as this would be an act of aggression towards the stone. And, by changing the context in which it exists, a part of the stone's story and what I can learn from it would be lost.

I engaged in a three-year process of understanding the stone guided by somaesthetics, where the body serves as a central tool in the fieldwork research. The process and interactions resulted in various forms of output such as field notes, drawings, and photographs. The practice and outputs thereof, intuitive or not, determined the path of the practice-based research process. The findings of the research generate a form of knowledge that only becomes known after interpretation. Then in turn, this added knowledge provides further context for future practice affecting the outcomes thereof. Thus the process becomes a form of dialogue between the artist and the stone.

1 Heinänen, Seija, Pauline von Bonsdorff, and Virpi Kaukio. *Tunne Maisema*. Helsinki: Maahenki, 2011: 108.

Nevertheless, each work can only become truly meaningful and understood in correlation with each other as a whole and within the context of the overall research. Therefore, it is understood that *Sense of a Stone* does not aim to create an object of art but rather is art as experience. This master's thesis is a documentation of the process which aspires to create a new narrative for the stone.

The master's thesis is divided into three parts.

Part I, Framework, is a literature review where I introduce various sources that have inspired *Sense of a Stone*. I start with an enquiry into stones and discuss stones in contemporary art followed by a study of the stone in context of *Kullervo's Curse* and interpretation of the findings. Furthermore, I introduce the essential theory and philosophy that have motivated the practice-based fieldwork. Then I present the methods applied in the fieldwork.

Part II, Fieldwork, presents the art process and practice, including the documentation and reflections concerning the visits and experiences with the stone.

Part III, Conclusions, is reflective, discusses what has been done, and includes analysis of personal, philosophical, academic, and methodological outcomes determined by the artist and the practice. Furthermore, the general impact and correlations of the thesis are discussed with personal attachment. A further development is introduced at the conclusion where the project is summarized.

I knock at the stone's front door.
"It's only me, let me come in.
I've come out of pure curiosity."

– Wislawa Szymborska, *Conversation with a Stone*, 1962.

PART I

Framework



Image 01

Aare Stone Line

Aleksi Jaakkola 2016.

Stones in Culture

Stones and rocks are everywhere. They have emerged from mother earth and submerged back into the earth by gravity and their own weight. They have essentially been thought to represent stability and solidity. But rocks are in fact not as everlasting as they are often considered. They are also eroding, reacting with other materials and blending with other rocks. They are mainly shaped through forces of nature, and ice and water have moved them long distances, causing disintegration. They are representations of the passage of time, sort of historical vessels.

From a cultural perspective, stones are an inseparable part of human life and have multiple meanings and associations. For example, stones stand for something unchanging that lasts through generations, and a stone can be a metaphor for time and spirit. It signifies a sense of belonging with hatched boundaries that conceal the deceased ancestors, and the tradition continues through the use of gravestones in present culture.

The worship of sacred stones is a remnant of early religious activities. In the Middle East, the Arabs worshiped the stone before the arrival of Islam. Erected stones stood as grave markers and indicated exceptional places. In northern Europe, distinctive stones were often considered to be sacred. These usually had ritualistic functions and it was believed that something breathes in the stones, such as fairies or deities.

There is a continuing relation as well as a long history between people and stones. Remarkably, in Sami tradition stones are regularly featured as having sacrificial or ritualistic meanings. In Iceland, even today there is active belief in elves and trolls, and it is usually thought that elves live in stones.

It seems that stones have an important role within human culture and life, varying from being a tool, building material, and even for making fire. When there is a function or a distinct role in society, then a stone can have its own story that describes its essence and character, where the shape derives and where it comes from. Therefore, it could be said that the culture creates the story that makes stones important.

Stones as Beings

The value of nature and nature-objects are determined by the human-nature relationship. Stones specifically carry various meanings and values in different cultures and ideologies. On the one hand, there is the anthropocentric viewpoint that values stones for their materialistic and aesthetic qualities and as commodities for human needs. On the other hand, some cultures view them as animate beings rather than inanimate objects, beings with which humans are interconnected through the same source of energy: the earth.

Here, I consider ‘being’ not to be a noun but a verb, the process of becoming. This idea suggests that a ‘human being’ is something that you do rather than something that you are. In a similar fashion, the idea of ‘stone-being’ is something actively changing within the stone. It is the fluctuating energy that amounts to experience, environment, and embodiment of stones. As such, they can be thought of as historical-vessels that are witnesses to the times untold.

Political theorist Jane Bennett proposes in her book *Vibrant Matter* that everything (all matter) is interconnected and alive. To be alive means that something has an ability and is capable of making a difference, producing effects, and altering the course of events.² Bennett shares Bruno Latour’s term ‘actant’, which is a source of action that can be either human or nonhuman.

"Actant is a term used to stress that material causes, as well as human actors, may be determinants of social interactions and outcomes. The concept of actants in a network also stresses the interaction between the material and human factors in any process."³

2 Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham (N.C.): Duke University Press, 2010.

3 Latour, Bruno. "ANT: Actor-Network-Theory: Terms and Concepts." January 26, 2009. <http://latourbugblog.blogspot.fi/2009/01/actor-network-theory-terms-and-concepts.html>

Bennet argues that substances are alive in their complex interrelationships, trajectories, and propensities. When stones are considered as ‘beings’ then there is a need to create narration, to find out their stories, histories, and characteristics. Canadian artist Bonnie Devine presented the indigenous Anishinaabe⁴ people’s perception of the animate world.⁵

“How to relate other beings in this world and place the ‘stone being’ in similar position as humans, as they are made of same substances. Anishinaabe’s philosophy is that what should be done is to establish a communication with them. Narration boosting out from the stones through the material of the rock itself – The stone ‘Being’ has a great story to tell.”

Devine explains that when stones break into parts, they are still individuals and at the same time part of the whole. Stones never lose the connection to the land or environment. Additionally, stones are individuals and some are grandfather stones, who identify themselves and make themselves heard. Those are the stones that are carried and brought to the sweat lodge⁶.

Then what kind of knowledge do stones embody? What can a stone tell us? Stones tell the story of the past through their usages, such as tools and weapons made from rocks, build formations such as burial mounds, and also their special aesthetic appearance created stories lasting for generations. But this kind of knowledge is bound to the human side of telling the story. What the stone itself could tell is yet a different perspective.

4 Anishinaabe is ethnic term, shared language and culture for tribes living around the great lakes in US and Canada.

5 *Stone as Species: Artist Talks* by Bonnie Devine & Egill Sæbjörnsson. Art Museum University of Toronto, November 27, 2015.

6 A sweat lodge is used for purification ceremonies or sweat, a Native American tradition.

“ ‘We are all relatives’ when taken as a methodological tool for obtaining knowledge means that we observe the natural world by looking for relationships between various things in it... This concept is simply the relativity concept as applied to a universe that people experience as alive and not as dead or inert. Thus Indians knew that stones were the perfect beings because they were self-contained entities that had resolved their social relationships and possess great knowledge about how every other entity, and every species, should live. Stones had mobility but they did not have to use it.”⁷

In my opinion, the way to access stones’ knowledge is to follow a similar approach to indigenous philosophies as well as using intuitive interpretations of things and connectivity. The hypothesis that stones and humans are made from the same substances and that the material carries its histories with it suggests that humans have inherited knowledge, but there is no understanding of how to read or access it.

7 Hampton, John G. “Contemporary Rock Art.” *Rocks, Stones Dust, Contemporary Art Devoted to Rocks and Their Relations*. Online Exhibition Catalogue. Ed. John G. Hampton. The Justina M. Barnicke Gallery and the University of Toronto Art Centre, 28 Oct.– 18 Dec. 2015.

In this chapter I will provide examples of how stones are situated within contemporary art. For example, stones are used for making statements or addressing issues, and sometimes when working with land they are unavoidable. Additionally artists use stones as connectors to the past. Stones are not only telling stories symbolically, they are also given a voice. All the variation lies in the relationship between the artist and the stones, are they as medium or object, either they been treated as they are as beings. Nevertheless, in the end the relations comes to the issue of connectivity and intentions.

El Chaco

Artists Guillermo Faivovich and Nicolás Goldberg proposed a project for dOCUMENTA (13), wherein they would borrow *El Chaco* meteorite from Argentina and install it at the Fridericianum Museum in Kassel for 100 days. The plan was to return the meteorite to its original location after the exhibition.

The artist's intention was to criticize the theft of cultural and natural heritage by repeating and reversing the colonial trajectory of goods, materials, and people. The proposal caused a stir amongst the Moqoit people (local indigenous tribe) on whose land the meteorite is located and amongst anthropologists who had studied the ancient relationship between the meteorites and the traditions of the Moqoit. The organizers of documenta(13) required a full consensus in the Moqoit council. The project was withdrawn after the Moqoit council meeting, where the majority of the tribe was in favour of loaning the stone, but a few opposed. As the organisers of documenta(13) preconditioned a full consensus of the matter with the Maqoit, the artist had no other option than to call off the project.⁸

The *El Chaco* meteorite stone has a ritualistic value to the people and the upset was expected. Speculatively, a similar debate would take place in Keuruu in connection with my plans for Kullervo's stone loan, even though it does not hold a particular significance at the moment.

8 Documenta13. <http://d13.documenta.de/#/research/research/view/el-chaco>



Image 02

El Chaco meteorite

Image 03

Broken Circle 1971

Spiral Hill 1972

Robert Smithson

Kivi

Anne Koskinen's artwork *Kivi* (2003) is located in Vuosaari, Helsinki. It is based on a found 'mother' stone from in situ, which has been replicated and then transported to the same location where the 'mother stone' originates. The original stone remains in the site lying partially under the water, and the bronze replicas are placed in different angles on the slope near the canal.⁹ The artist's idea was that the bronze sculptures would also function as seats and therefore would get polished by use together with aging over time, creating the aesthetic look.

The artwork links the place's old characteristics to the new and supports the continuity of old 'genius loci' into the process of creating new. As I understand her work 'Kivi', she grasped the essence of place and nurtured its characteristics over the transition period until the new place was constructed.

Broken Circle & Spiral Mountain

For the group exhibition of contemporary art Sonsbeek (1971) in the Dutch city of Arnhem, Robert Smithson (1938-1973) actualised *Broken Circle* (1971) and *Spiral Hill* (1972) in an inactive sandpit in Emmen. On a conical mound, a spiral path runs counter-clockwise. At the top of the *Spiral Hill* is an observation platform affording the best view of *Broken Circle*, whose centre contains a large erratic boulder surrounded by a canalised circle formation.

"Somewhat removed from the center of the circle lies a large boulder. The rock is one of the largest of its kind in Holland. It was carried here during the ice age by a glacier which ran diagonally across present-day Holland. The materialized presence of a center disturbed Smithson. The expense to remove the erratic block, however, was too great. Finally, he thought: It became a dark spot of exasperation, a geological gangrene on the sandy expanse... a kind of glacial 'heart of darkness'- a warning from the Ice Age."¹⁰

9 Koskinen, Anne. "Kivi." 2003. <http://taidemuseo.hel.fi/suomi/veisto/veistossivu.html?id=456&sortby=statue>

10 Dreher, Thomas. "Robert Smithson, Land Reclamation and the Sublime." *Artefactum* Nr.45. 1992: 26-30. http://dreher.netzliteratur.net/6_LandArt_Smithson.pdf

In this example, here I see a conflict between the erratic boulder and the artist, including the artist's approach towards the environment. Smithson felt that the boulder was situated in the wrong place, interrupting his plans for his work. He wanted to move it, but it was too costly. Further, there could be other undiscussed factors, such as how those erratic stones were viewed in the Netherlands, or how perhaps the stone's bearing also influenced the artist because it was declared to be a permanent structure, the odd spot, in his artwork. I believe that Smithson lacked sensitivity and understanding towards the location, which after all was an old sandpit.

Land art projects, especially from American artists, have been criticized. For example, Hamish Fulton spouted his concern about artists' attitude in an interview in 1982:

"The tons of earth shifted by American land artists aroused a lot of discussions, particularly in Europe where many people saw their art as being purely urban and aggressive. I feel the ... artists you mention use the landscape without ... any sense of respect to it ... I see their art as a continuation of the so-called 'heroic conquering' of nature".¹¹

To connect the presented artworks above with my stone project, one can affirm that all the artists have been affected by the stones in one way or another. Therefore, a question can be asked, do the stones have some means to affect where and how the projects lead? Could they speak out?

11 Auping, Michael. *Common Ground: Five Artists in the Florida Landscape: Hamish Fulton, Helen and Newton Harrison, Michael Singer, Alan Sonfist*. Sarasota, Fla: John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, 1982.

Giving Stones a Voice

Examples of artworks giving a voice to stones, although a humanistic voice, include Jimmie Durham's (b.1940) artwork *Prehistoric Stone Tool* (2004) that consists of text and stone. The stone has been used for smashing all kind of objects during a summer course earlier in the same year.¹²

"The text piece *Prehistoric Stone Tool* from the same year turns the tables on the perpetrator, as the stone reveals an ill will of its own:"¹³

*'This simple flint hammer was made almost 40,000 years ago in the area of the river Seine close to present-day Paris. Of course, knowing so little of the lives and culture of people who produced this tool, it can only be conjecture as to its use. However, we can HEY! OW, OW, AIEE! STOP! STOP! WHY ARE YOU HITTING ME? PLEASE! STOP! OH NO! STOP! OUCH!'*¹⁴

There is also Egill Sæbjörnsson's (b.1973) installation *The Egg or the Hen, Us or Them* (2011) at Künstlerhaus Bremen.¹⁵ Egill's installation consists of talking and singing stones. "They engage in dialogue and exchange views about their essence, their desire and their dreams." (exhibition text, Künstlerhaus Bremen, 2011)

It seems easy to give a voice to a stone, but it is more complex to really reflect the stones as they are and what stories they can tell. Giving a voice to stones humanises them and transforms them into beings easier to relate to in a human context. Doing so could echo what the stones are and how they see the world. However, giving the stone a voice could reflect the needs that the stone addresses. It could be that the stones are using the artist as a medium to speak out loud, a fascinating concept.

12 Durham, Jimmie. *Smashing*. 2004. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SOj9vumZOY>

13 Kreuger, Anders. "Stone As Stone: An Essay About Jimmie Durham." *Afterall* 30. 2012: 14-27.

14 Text is part of the work: *Prehistoric Stone Tool*, 2004. Jimmie Durham.

15 Künstlerhaus Bremen. "Egill Sæbjörnsson. *The Egg or the Hen, Us or Them*." <http://www.kuenstlerhausbremen.de/egill-s-bj-rnsson-the-egg-or-the-hen-us-or-them/>

These presented artworks show that the stones have meaning in our contemporary culture as their coexistence stretches as long as human history. The reason why I chose these particular artworks is that they all highlight the artists' sensibility and attitude, not only towards the stones but toward nature itself. Smithson and the meteorite *El Chaco* artists Faivovich and Goldberg held aggressive intentions, physically moving the stones. The fascinating thought is that in both cases, the artists changed their original plans. *El Chaco* did not go to dOCUMENTA (13), and Smithson unwillingly was forced to combine the erratic boulder into his artwork. In contrast, Koskinen's approach was gentle and respectful towards the stone and the site, and her plan was completed. Although the surrounding landscape transformed in her work, on the contrary the stone kept its role and its presence strengthened within the artwork.

Jimmie Durham and Egill Sæbjörnsson have given an active role to the stones, literally a voice even, which is already much closer to a humanistic perspective seeing them as alive beings that might have something to say. However, these works present how much we know about the stones and their life. The closest we can get is to use imagination to hear their voice or even think that they have one.

The *Sense of a Stone* started with an objective attitude that changed later, then I wanted to hear what the stone itself could tell. What could I learn from it?



Image 04

Prehistoric Stone Tool

Jimmi Durham 2004



Image 05

Kullervo's Curse

Akseli Gallen-Kallela 1899

This chapter is based on literary sources that are mainly second-hand interpretations filtered through their authors. Then comes another interpretative layer where I have filtered them accordingly to reach my goals. As one of the aims of this thesis is to determine the stone's story in the *Kullervo's Curse*, it is essential to establish the conditions where Akseli Gallen-Kallela's artistic process took place. It is the same idea that the painting cannot be truly understood without understanding the experiences behind it.

Note for the reader, when I am referring to artist Axel Gallén which changed his name to Akseli Gallen-Kallela in 1907. For clarification I am using name Axel Gallén because the painting was made before changing his name. Sometimes I use Akseli Gallen-Kallela when referencing.

Value of the Painting

The process of forming the nation started in the early nineteenth century, after Finland became the Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire, when a distinct literary and artistic landscape discourse was developed to represent the emerging national feeling. Karelia became an important territorial context for national identity. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Karelian culture in general and the Karelian landscape in particular were the main themes of the National Romantic movement of Finnish artists and intellectuals.¹⁶ Due to expanding industrialisation, Finnish landscape was changing, and the conception of nature changed due to the extended usage of natural resources by the booming forest industry.

16 Jones, Michael, and Kenneth Olwig. *Nordic Landscapes: Region and Belonging On the Northern Edge of Europe*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008: 521.

“The radical expansion of the forest industry turned the forest into commodities, and their major value was now a monetary one..”¹⁷
The changes in the environment resulted in many artists developing a special relationship with nature, for example Axel Gallén and Pekka Halonen.

Kalevala¹⁸ played a key role in creating the Finnish identity and forming the nation. It also inspired many artists and illustrated works to be produced, even at present, but Axel Gallén’s Kalevala themed paintings are what people would associate with Kalevala. Therefore, I consider that Axel Gallén has a strong influence on the national imagery and that we still picture the country through his paintings. “Gallén’s paintings have built the Finnish identity and can be compared to the Kalevala as treasures of national art.”¹⁹

One of these valued paintings is *Kullervo’s Curse*, Gallén’s depiction of Kullervo’s story in Kalevala and where the stone appears. Therefore, I will start my investigation of the stone with the story behind the painting.

17 Lukkarinen, Ville, and Annika Waenerberg. *Suomi-kuvasta Mielenmaisemaan: Kansallismaisemat 1800- Ja 1900-luvun Vaihteen Maalaustaiteessa*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura: Taidekoti Kirpilä, 2004: 331.

18 Finnish national epic.

The Kalevala 1835, second edition in 1849, compiled and edited by Elias Lönnrot on the basis of the epic folk poems he had collected in Finland and Karelia. This poetic song tradition, sung in an unusual, archaic trochaic tetrametre, had been part of the oral tradition among speakers of Balto-Finnic languages for two thousand years. The Kalevala marked an important turning-point for Finnish-language culture. It bolstered the Finns’ self-confidence and faith in the possibilities of a Finnish language and culture. The Kalevala began to be called the Finnish national epic. SKS/ <http://neba.finlit.fi/kalevala/index.php?m=154&l=2> Retrieved 6th of May 2017.

19 Vento, Urpo. “The Role of the Kalevala in Finnish Culture and Politics.” *Finnish Literature Society, Nordic Journal of African Studies* 1(2). 1992: 86.

Excerpt from Kalevala Rune 33: ²⁰

Thereupon young Kullerwoinen
Called his herd to rest in safety,
Sat upon a grassy hillock,
Took his basket from his shoulders,
Took therefrom the oat-loaf,
Turned it over in his fingers,
Carefully the loaf inspected,
Spake these words of ancient wisdom:
"Many loaves are fine to look on,
On the outside seem delicious,
On the inside, chaff and tan-bark!"

Then the shepherd, Kullerwoinen,
Drew his knife to cut his oat-loaf,
Cut the hard and arid biscuit;
Cuts against a stone imprisoned,
Well imbedded in the centre,
Breaks his ancient knife in pieces;
When the shepherd youth, Kullervo,
Saw his magic knife had broken,
Weeping sore, he spake as follows:
"This, the blade that I bold sacred,
This the one thing that I honor,
Relic of my mother's people!
On the stone within this oat-loaf,
On this cheat-cake of the hostess,
I my precious knife have broken.
How shall I repay this insult,
How avenge this woman's malice,
What the wages for deception?"

From a tree the raven answered:
"O thou little silver buckle,
Only son of old Kalervo,
Why art thou in evil humor,
Wherefore sad in thy demeanor?
Take a young shoot from the thicket,
Take a birch-rod from the valley,
Drive thy herd across the lowlands,
Through the quicksands of the marshes;
To the wolves let one half wander,
To the bear-dens, lead the other;
Sing the forest wolves together,
Sing the bears down from the mountains,
Call the wolves thy little children,
And the bears thy standard-bearers;
Drive them like a cow-herd homeward,
Drive them home like spotted cattle,
Drive them to thy master's milk-yards;
Thus thou wilt repay the hostess
For her malice and derision."
Thereupon the wizard answered,
These the words of Kullerwoinen:
"Wait, yea wait, thou bride of Hisi!
Do I mourn my mother's relic,
Mourn the keep-sake thou hast broken?
Thou thyself shalt mourn as sorely
When thy, cows come home at evening!"

From the tree he cuts a birch-wand,
From the juniper a whip-stick,
Drives the herd across the lowlands,
Through the quicksands of the marshes,
To the wolves lets one half wander,
To the bear-dens leads the other;
Calls the wolves his little children,
Calls the bears his standard-bearers,
Changes all his herd of cattle
Into wolves and bears by magic.

In the west the Sun is shining,
Telling that the night is coming.
Quick the wizard, Kullerwoinen,
Wanders o'er the pine-tree mountain,
Hastens through the forest homeward,
Drives the wolves and bears before him
Toward the milk-yards of the hostess;
To the herd he speaks as follows,
As they journey on together:
"Tear and kill the wicked hostess,
Tear her guilty flesh in pieces,
When she comes to view her cattle,
When she stoops to do her milking!"

Then the wizard, Kullerwoinen,
From an ox-bone makes a bugle,
Makes it from Tuonikki's cow-horn,
Makes a flute from Kiryo's shin-bone,
Plays a song upon his bugle,
Plays upon his flute of magic,
Thrice upon the home-land hill-tops,
Six times near the coming gate-ways.

20 Lönnrot, Elias. *The Kalevala* /Rune XXXIII. Translated by John Martin Crawford. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Kalevala/Rune_XXXIII

The Story Behind the Painting

Kullervo's Curse

Kullervo's Curse has its foundation on *Kalevala* rune 33. The young Kullervo was a slave of the house of Ilmarinen and was sent to herd livestock, and the lady of the house baked a loaf of bread with a stone inside to take with him.

The only connection to his deceased blood family is a knife he treasure, and carries with him at all times. When Kullervo takes the knife to cut the bread, the blade breaks on the stone inside. Full of rage, Kullervo casts a spell or 'curse' for revenge and leads wild beasts back to the house instead of the livestock. When the lady goes to milk the animals, they attack her. The lady begs for her life and promises all the goods that Kullervo had been denied earlier by her. Kullervo does not show mercy.

That is the starting point for the chain of tragic affairs that goes from seducing his sister and revenging Untamo's family up to taking his life at the end.

Meanings

Various interpretations of the story have been put forward. One claims that the painting refers to or is reaction against the Russian rule where Kullervo represents the revolting Finnish people.²¹ Another put forward by Janne Gallén-Kallela-Sirén connects the painting to the internal disagreements between the Fennomans and Svekomans.²² Both these interpretations appear unsatisfactory to me when thinking of its genuine *Kalevala* connection.

However, the aesthetic evaluation of the painting tells us much and could be connected to many ideas, such as the gesture of the Kullervo, colours, and other symbolic references having possible layered meanings and could be also regarded as political.

21 Gallen-Kallela-Sirén, Janne. *Minä Palaan Jalanjäljilleni: Akseli Gallen-Kallelan Elämä Ja Taide*. Helsinki: Otava, 2001: 265.

22 Gallen-Kallela-Sirén, p.266.

Alternatively, I concur that the painting reflects the transition period from heathenism to Christianity.²³ In Kalevala, the house of Ilmarinen and Kullervo's family and the house of Untamo (Kullervo's uncle) represents the old belief system, and Kullervo represents the confusion in the transition. From worshipping the mother earth to masculine-dominated Christian culture.

I see the story as a moral metaphor: small deeds grow to the point of devastation and the story is attached to the power structure of the past manifested into the stone behind Kullervo. The small stone baked into the bread is a premonition of what is to come. If the story and the painting is referring to old animistic beliefs before Christianity, then the stone could have a metaphorical meaning connected to feminine quantity.

If the stone is connected to old beliefs, then related terms should be understood in the context of their past and functions. *Pyhä* (sacred) refers to a place or geological feature. It was attached to the territorial system, referring to a border or feature in landscape that defines the territory within the wilderness. The places that have been called *pyhä* were often at a great distance from the sites where people were living. The function was to mark the outermost boundaries of the living area (Anttonen 2007). After the arrival of Christianity, *Pyhä* changed its meaning, and now it means 'holy' or 'sacred'.

Another significant term is 'hiisi' (devil, goblin, demon). Now it is considered negative in meaning and refers to something such as a post-mortal entity or other inhuman creature living in the forest. Before Christianity, 'hiisi' was used in everyday language to indicate a place with a topographical anomaly or special feature for a ritualistic purpose. These places were within the outer limits of the dwelling place. During the Viking Age, *Hiisi* referenced a place for cultic activities or a burial ground. Before the arrival of Christianity, it was considered and used in a positive sense.

23 Anttonen, Veikko. "Religion in Prehistoric Finland." *The Handbook of Religions in Ancient Europe*. Durham; Bristol: Acumen, 2013: 373.

A similar term that people use now would be the ‘metsänväki’ (forest folk), the things living in nature. According to Veikko Anttonen;

“In the inland wilderness regions, religion can be understood principally as practices that regulated hunting in relation to land ownership, territorial divisions and areas of economic exploitation, and practices that defined the domain of women in society. Ritual practices at stone settings became the hallmarks of a new vision of life in which the invisible world of the souls of the dead and of animals acquired a special value as a source of economic growth, socio-political power, social security and personal health.”²⁴ (Anttonen Veikko, Religion in Prehistoric Finland)

Therefore, the stone can be associated with religious and spiritual aspects. As the stone is attached to Kalevala legend, logically the cultic functions should be considered as well as the possibility that it has been a territorial marking stone.

The Rowan

To get into the core of the stone, a few steps should be taken backwards. The closest that we can get to the moment when the stone was captured for the first time is to analyse the *Jamajärvi* (1889) painting. The *Jamajärvi* is a mimesis of the everyday landscape that the artist saw daily (a few hundred meters from the croft).

When analysing the painting, the stone stands out and is dominantly located in the middle of the forepart of the image. Around the stone lies fallen, dead, grey pine trees, and between the are young spruce trees. Vertically dominant, tall, pine trees are standing between the stone and the lake. Such a varied forest landscape indicates that there has been old forest previously, but the openness of the view connotes that the location was undergoing changes caused by livestock or cultivation. Next to the stone stands a small rowan tree carrying the weight of red berries.

The Rowan has a special role in Finnish folk tradition, and it has been considered sacred. In Kalevala, multiple runes refer to Rowan trees. A Finnish deity Rauni, forest Mother (Maan-Emo), was thought to be incarnated in the rowan tree. According to Anttonen, the early inhabitants of Finland during critical times laid the twigs of Rowan trees above doors to protect from external threats and dangers. The white flowers and red berries have determined the growing period of crops and have been symbols promoting and protecting the fertility of women.²⁵ Moreover, Satu Apo connects Rowans with female estrus, suggesting that there is sensual meaning connected to desires (Anttonen on Apo 1997)²⁶. Symbolically, the Rowan tree in *Kullervo's Curse* painting could refer to a sexually driven female, and the stone could be interpreted to represent mother earth.

The Rowan and the stone together, in my opinion, emphasises the pressure and desires that Kullervo was facing. The time reference in the painting is the end of summer when the Rowan tree is full of berries, which could refer to the results of the early desires blooming. Moreover, in *Kullervo's Curse*, the berry, the result, culminated to its tragic end.

Pekka Halonen's *Rowan Tree* (1894) was painted in the similar time of the year as Axel Gallén's *Jamajärvi* (1889). In a compelling similarity, not only do both have Rowan trees full of red berries, both paintings also present stones in front of the Rowan trees. This connection is fascinating because both painters were sharing the same ideologies, and both had an interest in nature and mythologies.

Could these similarities indicate that both artists were paying tribute to mother earth as the source of life by connecting the stones and the Rowan trees together? They were not the only ones, as art historian Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff writes: "For instance, Finland's holy tree, the rowan appears in the work of almost every artist inspired by the Kalevala. It occurs repeatedly in the epic itself, providing protection from evil spirits and foretelling war. It is depicted in Gallén's and Blomstedt's Kullervo subjects, but also by itself in many of Halonen's paintings, the most important of which is his 1894 Rowan Tree."²⁷

25 Anttonen, Veikko. "Erä- ja metsäluonnon pyhyys. Metsä ja metsänvijaa." *Kalevalanseuran vuosikirja* 73: 24-35. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1994.

26 Anttonen, Veikko. "Pihlaja, naisen kiima ja kasvumoiman pyhä locus." Electronic article 4.1 (1997). http://www.elore.fi/arkisto/1_97/vant197.html

27 Bonsdorff, Anna-Maria von. *Colour Ascetism and Synthetist Colour: Colour Concepts in Turn-of-the-20th-century Finnish and European Art*. Porvoo: Helsingin yliopisto, 2012: 257.



Image 06

Rowan Tree

Pekka Halonen 1894

I argue that the Rowan has a crucial meaning in both paintings, *Jamajärvi* and *Rowan Tree*, and that the paintings are connected through the painters' interest in nature's spiritual aspects and old beliefs as well as through their friendship. As von Bonsdorff stated, the Rowan tree became important for Halonen and was similarly a foundation for Gallén, where he connected the legends and stories to actual Finnish landscape. Therefore, the *Kullervo's Curse* is one of the most crucial and complex Kalevala paintings. In relation to my research, these paintings are situating the stone in *Kullervo's Curse* in a new light. I interpret that the stone in the painting represents the spirit of the mother earth (maan emo) as a source of life and stands for animistic beliefs of the past.

Mother Earth, Sampo, and Celestial History

As said earlier, the *Kullervo's Curse* is a Kalevala illustration. Therefore, the meaning should be depicted symbolically. Hence, I argue that the stone baked in the bread (cheat-cake) refers to the power of the lady of the Ilmarinen and the ongoing competition for dominance. The stone behind Kullervo represents old cultural layers that are contested. Accordingly, the stone represents power and wealth that I connect to the Sampo myth.²⁸

To support this hypothesis, I am establishing a connection with the celestial history of the Nordic/Baltic region and folklore. Author and former president of Estonia Lennart Meri (1929-2006) connected the Sampo with a meteorite impact in Saarenmaa, Estonia (Hobevalge, 1976). Similarly, Astronomer and cosmologist Toivo Jaakkola (1941-1995) connected Sampo to a celestial history of northern Europe. Several stories found in folklore refer to the meteorite impact; the dragon, firebird, and the tree of life that appears in folklore worldwide as well as in Kalevala can be connected with the catalytic events caused by meteorites hitting the earth. Jaakkola gave a lecture, Kalevala from a cosmic perspective (Kalevala kosmisen tapahtuman valossa), which was later published in Kalevala publication 1986.²⁹

28 The sampo brought riches and good fortune to its possessor. The Sampo's story can be found from poem 10 in Kalevala. Similar mythical artifacts are 'Mill Grótti' from Nordic mythology producing gold and salt and bringing happiness.

29 Jaakkola, Toivo. "Kalevala kosmisen tapahtuman valossa." *Kalevalaseuran Vuosikirja 66: Kirjokannesta Kipinä : Kalevalan Juhlavuoden Satoa*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1986.

Jaakkola dates the Saarenmaa Kaali meteorite event to episodes in Kalevala such as the birth of iron in lakes. Moreover, he claims that the iron ore of the meteorite was cast to tools, weapons, and armour or other things that could be traded. The meteorite impact has been estimated to have occurred between 1690 and 1510 BCE.³⁰

Lennart Meri (1976) interprets that the place was Lake Kaali in Saarenmaa, known amongst the geographers and philosophers starting from as early as Pytheas. Between 350-325 BCE Pytheas visited the Island Ultima Thule far in the north in the place called “the grave where Sun fell dead.” Also, Cornelius Tacitus locates worship activities associated with a meteorite including worship of the Mother of the God, the Mother of Gods, Cybele (Rhea).

Although, the idea connecting Sampo to celestial iron and its utilisation Meri suggests that the iron helped make Saaremaa an important centre of smithing and trade.³¹

Such occurrence of vivid natural disasters and unexplainable phenomena have found their way to folklore around the Baltic sea, and the story must have travelled far. The meteorite crash is found in the Kalevala epic. The Rune 47 of the revised Kalevala (1849) has a vivid, comprehensive, and accurate account of the disaster that had been passed down through some four millennia (about 160 generations) of oral tradition.³² In addition, this event has also entered the Beowulf saga. “[T]he sky-plague that was Beowulf’s nemesis was a long creature that flew at night over a coast of grey stone cliffs with vaults that hid treasure-troves of ancient heathens of another race”.³³

In *Rune 47* in the Kalevala, the event is connected to feminine deity. According to Haas, “There is certainly a parallel to the Kalevala account, with the ancient Greek tale of Phaëthon where the disaster is set in motion when the sky-god Ukko gives the maiden Imbi the task of caring for a heavenly fire, which was to become a new moon and a new day; Imbi lets it slip through her fingers and fall to the earth.”³⁴

30 Siim, Veski, Atko Heinsalu, Anneli Poska, Leili Saarse, Jüri Vassiljev. “The physical and Social Effects of the Kaali Meteorite Impact – a Review.” http://www.gi.ee/~veski/Kaali_icsu.pdf

31 Haas, Ain, Andres Peekna and Robert E. Walker. “Echoes of Ancient Cataclysms in the Baltic Sea.” *Folklore, An Electronical Journal of Folklore*, Vol.23. 2003: 66. <https://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol23/echoes.pdf>

32 Haas, p.61.

33 Haas, p.65.

34 Haas, p.62.

Whereas, a Finnish archaeologist Unto Salo has accommodated both the Rowan hypothesis and Haavio's 'Hieros gamos'³⁵ theory into his new interpretation. Salo agrees with the view that Rauni - Ukko is used by Agricola as a metaphorical reference to the rowan tree, but also accepts the idea that the verses in Agricola have a sexual connotation, adding new evidence to support this combined hypothesis: "archaeological findings of vulva-shaped flint stones, the oldest of which have been dated to the early Roman period, about 50-200 CE, and extending to the later Roman period, 200-400 CE, when they were most common."³⁶

Oval, vulva-shaped flint stones were still in use during the Merovingian period (550-800 CE). On the basis of such flint stone finds, Unto Salo assumes that "their form must be attributable to the myth of using an arrow to light the first (heavenly) fire, which was repeated as a rite when striking the earthly fire."³⁷ Kristiina Johansson describes how widespread the usage of fire striking stones was, meaning that not only the knowledge of how to use them spread but also the mythology behind the practice was exchanged.

"Strike-a-lights have been found in all countries in the Baltic area, and also from Ireland and Scotland.. These items, the size of a palm, have been dated to the period from the Roman Iron Age to the Viking Age; they are of oval or sharp-oval shape, usually made of quartz or quartzite and have a groove scraped in the centre. As the name reveals, they have apparently been used to strike fire with a firesteel, but they have often been connected with fertility magic."³⁸

35 Hieros Gamos (Greek ιερός γάμος, "sacred wedding"), or Hierogamy, refers to the coupling of a god and goddess or their earthly representatives, often having a symbolic meaning related to fertility and generally conducted in the spring. It can also refer to the primordial union of the masculine and feminine principles within the godhead. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Hieros_gamos.

36 Anttonen, Veikko. "Religion in Prehistoric Finland." *The Handbook of Religions in Ancient Europe*. Durham; Bristol: Acumen, 2013: 383.

37 Anttonen, p.383.

38 Johanson, Kristiina. "The Changing meaning of "Thunderbolts"." *Folklore, An Electronic Journal of Folklore*, Vol.42. 2009: 148.

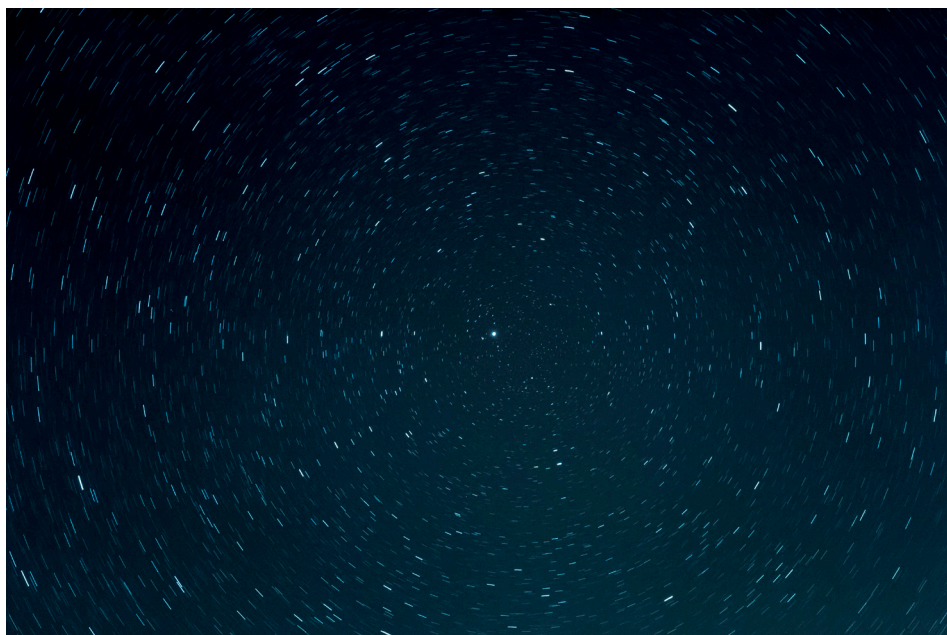


Image 07

Stella Polaris, time study

Aleksi Jaakkola 2016

I argue that the Sampo is a cognitive representation of the mythic origin of life and growth. Additionally, it refers to various sources of a livelihood and, thus, to the emergence of culture. Sampo's synonym 'kirjokansi' (which means the night sky full of stars) connects the Sampo to cosmic, celestial origins as it has been pictured as the cosmic centre pole, the northern star that the other stars rotate around.

Nevertheless, the Sampo is to a certain extent a centrepiece in the Kalevala epic. Accordingly, I connect the stone in *Kullervo's Curse* as a metaphorical reference to the origins of the culture, and the layered trail of past historical events could refer to tragic destinies similar to Kullervo that keep repeating throughout history. Together, with the stone being a reference to the meteorite, they have been a driving force in the development of culture and life. Moreover, there is a sign of the marriage of feminine and masculine (water and fire elements) that sparkled on the earth and made life possible.

A conclusive analogy can be made between the cultural development and the utilisation of iron. "The introduction of iron-working technologies (not just products) into Finnic cultural areas was a *technological quantum leap*"³⁹ Folklorist Frog explains: "Iron not only became an inherently magical substance: it appears to have been accompanied by a "package" of mythological material (images, motifs and whole narratives, including fundamental cosmological conceptions)..[.]"⁴⁰ According to Frog, the technology developed around iron cultivation changed the life, the culture as well the mythologies in the Finno-Baltic region.

"Nijolė Laurinkienė's (2008) proposal of a broad cycle of material about the Smith-God circulating in the Circum Baltic region can be expanded to include: a) the birth of the mythic smith at the beginning of the world; b) a creation of the celestial sphere integrating iron-working technologies and c) associated cosmological models; d) a (dualist) origin of iron; e) an origin of fire identified with j) an aetiology of lightning from the Smith in heaven." and g) a liberation of the captured sun.⁴¹

39 Frog. "Confluence, Continuity and Change in the Evolution of Mythology: The Case of the Finno-Karelian Sampo-cycle." *Mythic Discourses : Studies in Uralic Traditions*. 2012: 216.

40 Frog, p.216.

41 Frog, p.216-217.

How is this all connected to the stone in Keuruu and its interpretations? Through my 'symbolist eye' the meaning of the Sampo, in context with this thesis and the stone, symbolises the thriving culture that the utilisation of iron brought. The mystification of Iron tells the story of the origin of the life rooted in the heavens and celestial events. An interesting addition to this narrative is a meteorite impact in Keuruu way back in the dawn of the history of earth (<1800 Ma) discovered in 2004.⁴² If the meteorite made Saarenmaa a striving place culturally and economically, perhaps the same happened in Keuruu much earlier?

Nonetheless, Keuruu has had an exponential role in creating the culture and Finnish identity from a historical perspective. Coincidentally, the heavenly connection to Keuruu is not only the meteorite, but there are also industries named after celestial constellations such as Otava (Ursa Minor) and Orion.

42. *Supercontinent Symposium 2012 – Pre-Excursion Guidebook. Geological Survey of Finland. 2012.*

The Painter

Painter and Spirituality

What was Axel Gallén's relation to spirituality?

The time of fin-de-siecle (end of 19th century) in Finland was filled with the atmosphere of spiritualistic, occultist, and religious philosophies. Like Gallén, many artists went to Paris for education and were influenced by the bohemian life of the cultural hotspot at the time. Axel Gallén was amongst them, as he lived and studied there between 1885–86 and again between 1887–1889. Between the Paris years, Gallén spent a winter in Ekola Croft by lake Huhkojärvi in Keuruu. When he returned from his studies, he soon sought his way back to the rural countryside in Keuruu.

At that time, the symbolist movement influenced artistic impression along with new philosophies. It was believed that there was a source of knowledge that would explain the universe's structure, the spirit's primary essence, and how these are all connected. Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical writings and the mystic philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg's (1688-1772) writings were popular, dealing with religious-philosophical meditation and interpretation of religious texts (Kokkinen 2011 & Holm 2016). Gallén was already aware of spiritualistic practices from his mother Mathilda Gallén, and therefore he had a general interest in spirituality. It would be misleading not to account this influence at the time in Paris when examining his character when it comes to his philosophical and spiritual views.

There are several accounts of Gallén's interest in spirituality starting from his early years. According to author Eija Kämäräinen: "[...]because of his close relationship to his mother, whose interest in the supernatural, theosophy and spiritualism gave the growing boy the idea that death was both a horrifying experience and an unsolvable enigma."⁴³

43 Kämäräinen, Eija. *Akseli Gallen-Kallela: Artist and Visionary = Katsoin Outoja Unia*. Helsinki: WSOY, 1994: 8.

Kämäräinen describes his stay in Paris as the years of the ordeal for Axel, and according to the correspondence he was suffering from homesickness, longing for the Finnish nature and his fiancée Mary Slöör.⁴⁴

There are several indications that Gallén was seeking to establish a connection with the natural world. Gallén believed that there was yet a great deal of unknown things still to be found in nature.⁴⁵ Furthermore, art historian Nina Kokkinen says that there are indications that he was doing meditational exercises to sharpen his senses. Gallén wrote his mother Mathilda about what he had learned through his practice. In a diary entry from the 28th of April in 1894 he writes: “--I will teach her the new things that my senses have learned.”⁴⁶

In his notes Gallén also describes how he came in contact with nature-beings while canoeing, specifically the elements of water. Art historian Johannes Öhqvist later noted Gallén-Kallela’s special manner of perceiving with his sixth sense (Kokkinen about Jokinen 2004).⁴⁷

It should be noted, that Gallén was not alone in having an interest in new ideologies during this period. Sculptor Emil Wikström (1864-1942) describes in his ‘Vuosisatamme kronikka’ book the spiritualistic sessions and discussion of metaphysical questions with Axel Gallén.⁴⁸ Additionally, Tea Holms indicates in her doctoral dissertation, ‘Spiritismin muotoutuminen Suomessa’ (The birth of the Spiritistic movement in Finland) that many artists and cultural people attended spiritual sessions organised by author Minna Canth in the city of Kuopio between 1880-90. Holm claims to have followed well-known people from Finnish history such as Juhani Aho, J.H. Erkko, K.A. Tavaststjerna, Axel Gallén, Pekka Halonen, Elisabeth Järnefelt, and Jean Sibelius. It demonstrates how influential the new ideas and ideologies were at that time.

44 Kämäräinen, p.22.

45 Kokkinen, Nina. “Artist as initiated master.” *Fill Your Soul: Paths of Research Into the Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela*. Espoo: Gallen-Kallela Museum, 2011: 52.

46 Kokkinen, p.52.

47 Kokkinen refers to Teppo Jokinen 2004 “käsittää ja ymmärtää taidetta” correspondence between Johannes Öhqvist and Akseli Gallén-Kallela. In P. Laaksonen, S. Knuutila & U. Piela (ed.): *Kenttäkysymyksiä. Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja* 83. Helsinki: SKS.

48 Holm, Tea. *Spiritualismin Muotoutuminen Suomessa: Aatehistoriallinen Tutkimus*. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 2016: 82.

I believe that Axel Gallén was open to experiencing and learning new things, such as theosophy. It seems that it was demanding to satisfy his curiosity for the new, and it appears that he wanted to create his own path without getting attached to any isms or ideology too deeply. To the contrary, art historian Janne Gallen-Kallela-Sirén claims that he was a devoted Christian and had little to do with such circles.⁴⁹

From this perspective, Axel Gallén's relationship with Keuruu and the stone could be seen in new light. He spends a winter and summer in 1886-87 in Keuruu, and then he came back in 1889 after Paris. Indications are that by this time he was already aware of supernatural and spiritual philosophies and was interested in finding a deeper connection with nature and its animated beings.

Relation with Keuruu

I want to highlight the importance of Axel Gallén's stays in Keuruu. His first trip to Keuruu was in 1884, the second in 1886, and the third was in 1889 with his colleague and friend Swedish-Italian Count Louis Sparre that he met in Paris. The last was in 1917. Altogether Axel Gallén spends fourteen months there.⁵⁰

The second visit seems specifically important in relation to the stone. By then he already had one year of studies in Julian Academie in Paris. At this time he was refining his artistic style and finding the passion and direction for his practice. During this stay he strengthened his relation with nature, people, and the mythical past. Gallén found a remote, modest place to stay at Ekola croft. He stayed there over the winter living with the people till the end of August. As the stone was a near distance from the croft he must have been aware of its existence and possibly built some kind of connection to it.

The third visit to Keuruu occurred straight after finishing his studies in Paris; he convinced his student friend Louis Sparre to join him. Both settled in the same Ekola Croft where Axel Gallén stayed in 1886-87. It was then when he painted the *Jamajärvi* in 1889 where the stone appears the first time, which becomes the setting for *Kullervo's Curse* painting later.

49 Gallen-Kallela-Sirén, Janne. *Minä Palaan Jalanjäljilleni: Akseli Gallen-Kallelan Elämä Ja Taide*. Helsinki: Otava, 2001.

50 Gallen-Kallela, Aivi. *"Koko Elämäni On Siveltimessäni!": Akseli Gallen-Kallelan Neljä Matkaa Keuruulle*. Helsinki: A. Gallen-Kallela, 1993.



Image 08 **The Process of Kullervo's Curse**

This summer in Keuruu was also significant for the young nation-to-be, and a cultural summer festival was arranged in August 1889 that gathered the influential people that later formed a backbone for the Finnish cultural identity (nuorsuomalaisten ryhmä).

To conclude the importance and the relation to Keuruu, Keuruu was the place where Gallén established his relation with the folk and nature. With his artworks, Keuruu's landscape became a part of Finnish national imagery alongside Karelia.⁵¹

The Process of Kullervo's Curse

The process of making the artwork could give clues to meanings behind the stone. Seijä Heinänen describes the Kullervo's Curse's process in detail.

Gallén was working with the Kalevala theme in the 1890s, yet the first interpretation was an ink drawing already in 1883 called *Kullervo Aholla* (*Kullervo at Meadow*). He also made several sketches while in Korpilahti 1886. The first appearance of the Jamajärvi's (Huhkojärvi) landscape was in 1891 in an ink-watercolour drawing titled *Kullervo istuu kivellä* (*Kullervo sits on stone*).

The alteration to the original Jamajärvi landscape is that the Kullervo figure has replaced a small spruce tree in front of the stone and background with a figure of a cow with horns, otherwise they are identical. During 1892 he made several sketches. The sitting Kullervo changed to be standing in a burst of rage in an aquarelle painting in 1894. At this stage, the Kullervo is still naked with the similar gesture in the final painting. The goddess of revenge Ajattara makes an appearance behind Kullervo till the next ink, where Kullervo was accompanied only by a dog. Also, the landscape has been simplified and altered; it is mirrored but still distinctively the same landscape in Jamajärvi. In the final etching in 1896, Kullervo has pants on.⁵²

51 Gallen-Kallela, Aivi. "Koko Elämäni On Siveltimeäni": Akseli Gallen-Kallelan Neljä Matkaa Keuruulle. Helsinki: A. Gallen-Kallela, 1993.

52 Heinänen, Seija. "Matkoja maisemaan – Akseli Gallén-Kallela ja Pekka Halonen Keski-Suomessa." *Tunne maisema*. Helsinki: Maahenki, 2011: 56-57.

The *Kullervo's Curse* oil painting was based on the etching from 1896 with some alterations. Clouds were added, similar to the painting in 'Ukkospilviä taivaanrannassa' in 1897, a fallen dead pine tree and a coat on the rock were added, the position of the dog and the shoreline of the lake changed, and the number of pine trees increased. The painting was finished in 1899 and had its first public appearance in Helsinki in 1900. Axel Gallén had told Johannes Öhqvist about the process: "If you only would know how much this picture has been bothering me, it has been with me last fifteen years, it has sprouted and bothered my brain immensely."⁵³

As we can come to terms that Axel Gallén's effort towards the *Kullervo's Curse* was immense, it can therefore be concluded that there is nothing in the painting without reason. Additionally, the stone's journey to the painting is one indication of its importance and it carries a meaning. Moreover, during the years when the *Kullervo's Curse* was in process, Gallén's artistic expressions were influenced by symbolism. Therefore I argue that the stone has a specific meaning and is not just a part of the landscape in the painting.

Stone Through Obscure

I have established that the stone could refer to old beliefs and possibly seen as a being rather than just a nature object. Furthermore, Gallén has been in its presence for one year and interested in nature and spirituality. It is possible that the stone concealed something that he wanted to capture. If Axel Gallén attempted to incorporate the spirit of the stone being as a representation of mother earth into the 'Jamajärvi' painting, how could that be possible? Here, I hypothesise that he used an aid in order to capture the essence of the stone.

The landscape and the stone are mirrored, when compared with *Kullervo's Curse* and the location that I have visited.⁵⁴ The 'Jamajärvi' in 1889 is not a mirrored presentation of the landscape. Three years later Gallén made *Erämaaajärvi* in 1892, a replication of the previous, but the colour tones are distinctively different than in *Jamajärvi*, otherwise the paintings are similar.

53 Heinänen, p. 57.

54 Heinänen, p. 55.

This proposes a question: was Axel Gallén dissatisfied with the *Jamajärvi* painting, and why is the tone so blue? I will hypothesise this later. Then follows the attachment to Kullervo's story and the Kalevala context. There followed numerous sketches and variations based on the original landscape resulting in the *Kullervo's Curse* painting of 1899, which presents the landscape and the stone mirrored compared to the *Jamajärvi* and *Erämaajärvi* paintings.

On closer examination of *Jamajärvi* (1889)⁵⁵, the only sharp or focused area in the painting is a few Rowan Leafs and a bunch of berries in the middle of the painting. The rest of the image is more blurred and less detailed. There are two explanations for this, one that the artist wanted to highlight the Rowan tree by showing it in details and leaving the rest slightly blurred. The other is that he was using camera obscura as an aid for painting.

To support this I refer to the colour tone of the painting. It is much bluer than other paintings from him at that period. The blueness resulting from using an obscure aid has been identified as a problem when painting with the help of camera obscura. The painting process itself happens under the cloak or in darkness and the manoeuvring of the colour pallet and painting itself can be difficult.

Following I will present other arguments that supports that Gallén used camera obscura as an aid for capturing the landscape. First, the size of the painting 'Jamajärvi', is relatively small at 35 x 27 cm, which fits the camera obscura's limitations as reflecting the images that could be traced. Therefore the size supports the usage. For larger surfaces, the camera or the canvas has to be moved, which would result in distorted perspectives and proportions.

Second, by the end of the nineteenth century, there were portable commercial camera obscuras on the market and they were widely used by scientists and artists. Additionally, as he was a companion of Louis Sparre, it is most likely that they were well prepared to the trip and carried all possible tools with them.

Third, the depth of field in the painting appears to be narrow. The problematic issue in painting landscape images with camera obscura is that the landscape stretches for a long distance and the focus area is limited, resulting in objects in the far distance and at close range being unfocused.

55 Note for reader: I have not being able to see the original 'Jamajärvi' painting as it is owned by private person. Therefore, I base my observation on a digital image available on internet.

If Axel Gallén was using *obscura* as an aid, subsequently it can be questioned, why? He was well capable of producing realistic representation without the aid. I argue an alternative explanation. There could be ideas from author August Strindberg how photography with camera *obscura* techniques could be used to reveal the target's soul. This method or camera technique developed by Strindberg was aimed at accessing the genuine essence of the subject and its soul. As Strindberg and Gallén were friends and shared similar interests, there is the possibility that Gallén's usage of *obscura* shared a similar agenda with Strindberg's photography.

“[w]hat he truly wanted to capture with photography was the soul...attempts to photograph spirits. Similarly to spirit photography that sought to prove the existence of spirits, Strindberg aimed at establishing scientific proof for the existence of the soul.”⁵⁶

Gallén might have considered it an ideal chance to explore the technique with the stone and its animistic-being occupant. Furthermore, if he did succeed, he could have wanted to keep the essence of the spirit alive through the process of making the *Kullervo's Curse*. In addition, the mirroring of the landscape that occurred when the Kalevala theme was attached might be a result of passing the essence of the first image to the next.

There are indications that it was common that the artists at that time were also using aids such as ‘camera lucida’. According to Heinänen Gallén, he not only used his trained eye as a tool, he also made sketches and occasionally photographed places that could be worked later.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Axel Gallén was a curious person and eager to try new techniques, technologies, and mediums, which we can see from his skills with graphics, frescos, posters, and photography. Hence, it was plausible that Axel Gallén was familiar with *obscura* or similar devices and had tested them at some point.

56 Lahelma, Marja. *Ideal and Disintegration: Dynamics of the Self and Art At the Fin-de-siècle*. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2014: 201-202.

57 Heinänen, Seija. “Matkoja maisemaan – Akseli Gallén-Kallela ja Pekka Halonen Keski-Suomessa.” *Tunne maisema*. Helsinki: Maahenki, 2011: 74.



Image 09

**Aleksi Jaakkola posing as Kullervo by a
rowan tree and stone in Otaniemi, Finland**

Photo by Harri Piispanen 2015

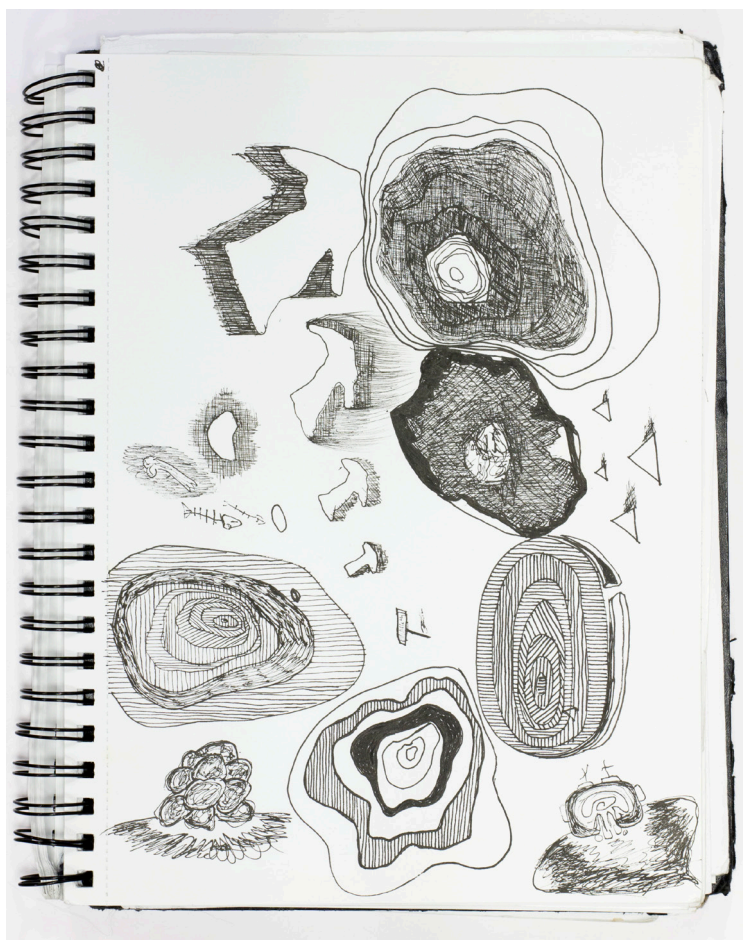


Image 10

Connections

Sketchbook drawings

Aleksi Jaakkola 2015

From this position, my presentation is based on the reasoning and findings above. To start with I argue that the stone in *Kullervo's Curse* stands for the heart of the culture.

The stone is a manifestation of the life cycle and its placement behind the young Kullervo in the painting echoes the transition and power struggle that occurs when new culture replaces the old. In this sense, it is an icon of ancient times.

To create a narrative from the painting, I connect it to the history of the country. It started when the oral tradition of people was written down as an epic story, which consequently led to the formation of a nation and national identity. Additionally, the painting manifests the characteristics and the faith of Finnish people through Kullervo's tragic story. Just as Kullervo was an abused child and a victim of brothers turning against each other (Untamo fighting against Kalervo), similarly the civil war broke out in Finland in 1918. The painting, therefore, can be seen as a premonition of what lied ahead when it was finished 1899.

This brings us to Axel Gallén and his dedication to communicating with nature beings. He was not alone in seeking a special relationship with nature, Pekka Halonen shared a similar interest as well as did many of their contemporaries.

I argue that Gallén had an idea of the unique characteristics of the stone already in 1886 when he was living in Ekola, and the stone had been in his thoughts while living in Paris. After finishing his studies, he returns to Keuruu, Ekola where he paints the stone (Jamajärvi, 1889). As the stone had a special significance to Gallén, he wanted to capture its 'aura' or 'essence'. To do so Axel Gallén used techniques similar to those used by his friend August Strindberg, capturing the soul or spirit of the photographed models with camera obscura. As a curious mind and experimental artist Gallén took the symbolism literally to completion, as I argue that Gallén used Strindberg's idea to attempt capturing the 'soul' of the stone.

As Axel Gallén concealed the ‘spirit’ of the stone in the *Kullervo’s Curse*, he anchored the painting firmly in the old heathen beliefs of the Finnish folk.

Nevertheless, I continue my interpretations by connecting the stone to the culture and its origin. It is rooted to the catalyst events at the moment when the Deity of skies inseminated mother earth with the meteors resulting in life by their union of mixing, fire, water, iron, and the other building blocks, and finally caused the development of the human culture.

If the stone manifests the culture, in a similar manner the Sampo in Kalevala reflects how the culture flourishes and creates wealth. I came to this conclusion by examining Kalevala and finding references to Rowans’ symbolism, which lead me to examine the celestial connections. Interestingly I was aware of my uncle, cosmologist Toivo Jaakkola’s theory about the Sampo much earlier and now it emerged during this project and helped me create my interpretation. Meri and Jaakkola connected meteorites to the usage of iron and flourishing culture with the hypothetical connection to the Sampo, and this provided a new perspective to the narrative of the stone.

The history of iron-working technologies in the Finno-Baltic area affected all areas of life including the folklore and the world views that Kalevala stands for, connecting it all ‘Iron’ as Frog indicates. With iron the culture developed, Kalevala stories were told creating identity and the building blocks for forming a nation, and in the process there was the *Kullervo’s Curse* painting with a stone. Now, 118 years later the stone wants to tell its story, and perhaps start a new chapter in its being-ness.

Consequently, the stone conceals all this knowledge in its compressed form, and with my research I have found all these interconnected aspects stemming out from it in a remarkable way. So, what could it tell about the present day? If the stone symbolizes the wealth and flourishing culture of the past, it also reminds of its decline. Thus, it could stand as a warning of what lies ahead in the future.

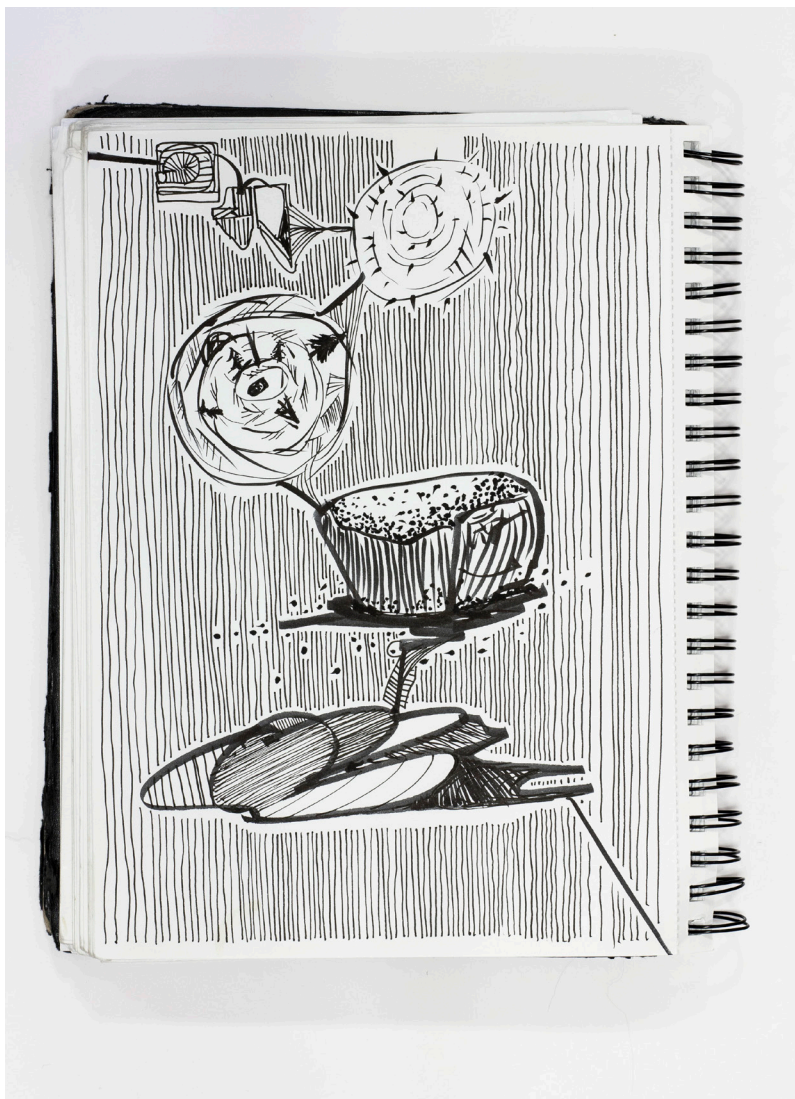


Image 11

Process Sketch

Aleksi Jaakkola 2016

Art as Experience and Somaesthetics

The main ideas for my practice include *art as experience*, the body as a tool for physical and mental processing, and how these notions relate to the subjective / objective debate for validating knowledge. In order to describe my philosophical standpoint it is essential to first understand my methods and the usage of the body as a tool.

American thinkers David Thoreau (1817–1862) and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) argued that the life is for living and the walk is for walking. Later this was developed into pragmatic philosophy. Pragmatists “[...]rejected the dualistic epistemology and metaphysics of modern philosophy.”⁵⁸ Philosopher John Dewey (1859–1952) became a leading figure in pragmatism, and his aesthetic theory took art as experience and asked, when is it art?

John Dewey’s theories were taken from a theoretical to a practical level by Richard Shusterman (b.1949) and Allan Kaprow (1927–2006). Shusterman developed *Somaesthetics* as a philosophical discipline and practiced the philosophy rather than only write and theorize, whereas Kaprow turned everyday life into art. Both validate the body as a central tool for practicing philosophy, art and experiencing everyday life.

For example, take Shusterman’s performative project *Man in Gold*. With photographer Yann Toma he entered the fields of practicing art that included performative actions in a golden outfit.⁵⁹ Shusterman describes this process: “one way of bringing together art and philosophy is to use artistic practice to get a better understanding of what art is, not just from the viewer’s point of view (the typical philosopher’s point of view) but from the creator’s point of view.”⁶⁰ Shusterman says: “there is no art and no philosophy without a person who is creating and thinking.”⁶¹ Thus, Shusterman tries to use somaesthetics to reconnect the philosophy to the body by turning the body into a valuable tool to understand the world and itself.

58 Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/dewey/>

59 Richard Shusterman. “The Philosopher without Words.” *Lecture*. Faculty of Arts, Aalto University, Espoo, Finland: 05.04.2017.

60 From the Dialogue between Pan Gongkai and Richard Shusterman 24.03.2013. *The Journal of Somaesthetics, Somaesthetics and Visual Art*, Vol. 1, No.1. 2015: 49.

61 *The Journal of Somaesthetics, Somaesthetics and Visual Art*, Vol. 1, No.1. 2015: 52.

Kaprow however challenged the idea of art as an object and the idea that art could be anything and everything. He introduced the concept of *happenings*, in which performance and environmental arts take roots. Kaprow compared *happenings* to action paintings and abstract expressionism, where the body performs and action occurs. He suggests that everyday life and actions can be considered art if they are done with a conscious mind. For example, the act of brushing teeth can be performance, even though the performer himself is the only spectator. With this less restricted definition of art, he suggested the idea that aesthetics in everyday life and experiences have an equal significance to that of a painting.⁶²

“In short, for somaesthetics, embodied philosophy is more than the theoretical affirmation and articulation of the body’s crucial role in all perception, action, and thought; it is more than the elaboration of this theme in the familiar discursive forms of writing, reading, and discussing texts. Embodied philosophy also means giving real body to thought through somatic style and behavior, demonstrating one’s philosophy through one’s own bodily example, expressing it through one’s manner of living.... to really walk the walk, not just talk the talk.”⁶³

As I follow a pragmatic soma-philosophical approach, I am contemplating first-hand experiences where exploration involves a broad range of applied sensory interactions. Like Kaprow, I follow Dewey’s philosophy of experiences. Furthermore, I adopt the idea of *Somaesthetics* introduced by Richard Shusterman. Similar to *happenings* or *art as experience*, *somaesthetics* places the body as the central tool for artistic creation, appreciation, and perception. This leaves space for the idea that the spirit equals substance, a concept that I connect with intuition. Fundamentally this means avoiding overanalysing the subject’s physical qualities, such as investigating it nano-microscopically or weighing its atoms, preferably instead leaving space for interpretations and spiritual aspects. Therefore, the objective substances ought to be sensed and experienced somatically and not only through a microscope.

62 Kaprow, Allan. “Performing Life.” *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993: 196.

63 Shusterman, Richard. *Thinking through the body: essays in somaesthetics*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012: 4.

Art Theory

Sense of a Stone is practice-based investigation stemming from various art practices of environmental, land, eco, site-specific, installation, and performance art. Nonetheless, it is impossible to pinpoint any art practice that this project could be connected to directly and is instead a hybrid and combination of many. I therefore will introduce artists and practices that are reflective of my project and practice.

To place my project in the context of art theory and classification, I will connect to similar philosophical views that I associate with the following artist. I will start with philosopher John Dewey as presented earlier. His pragmatic philosophy describes the art theory that is the foundation of my practice targeting processes aimed at creating understanding that turns into artwork. Allan Kaprow's suggests that art is connected to life and everything. In order to bring life to art or to bring art closer to everyday life, he turned art into participatory, performative happenings. These activities questioned the conventional idea that art is bound to objects and traditional art spaces.

With art freed from its bounds, engaging in activities with nature and the environment emerged as art context. For example Robert Smithson (1938-1973) regarded the environment as a medium. His land artworks were done in large scale, by transforming the land into visual representation of his ideas. Andy Goldsworthy was also reacting similarly and transforming the natural environment, only on a much smaller scale and with sensitiveness. What is common between them? Neither bring new materials to nature; they transformed what was already there.⁶⁴ Both artists were in dialogue with the landscape. Additionally, Hamish Fulton's (b. 1946) walks create a state of being openly receptive and interconnected with the landscape which turns into a performance itself or a *happening* in Kaprow's terms.

When comparing Smithson and Goldsworthy's practices to mine, I similarly draw inspiration from the landscape and my journeys there. However, my aim to understand and gain knowledge of the chosen topic or matter is closer to Fulton's practice.

64 For exception Robert Smithson did series of pouring materials not in nature but in urban environments: Asphalt Rundown 1969, Concrete Pour 1969, Gleu Pour 1969.

Goldsworthy and Smithson are concerned with the landscape and its aesthetic values. As another example, artists Christo & Jeanne-Claude use landscape and nature as well urbanscape for their temporary works that attract the public's attention. With the publicity they address social and cultural issues they wish to highlight or criticise, whereas my audience is mainly connected to my faculty and the community of practice.

For instance, I adopted methods similar to Hamish Fulton's when I went to *Pyhä* mountain, the outcome of which is summarised in the *Fieldworks* section. I had made a plan of actions or concepts that I followed, or in other words, it was a site-specific performance. Similarly, Fulton follows certain themes decided beforehand for his work. Fulton bases his practice on walks, and his presentation of artwork is minimal. He distils long walks into a few words, graphs, or into just one image. Providing minimal clues about his experience is a romantic and poetic notion. A single word can trigger a series of feelings and ideas, especially when aware of the amount of action and dedication involved. Fulton explains his practice in a lecture (Tate 2002)⁶⁵ and that his aim is to build a language based on his experiences. However, what he does most, are dictated by hints in situ.

Fulton performs pre-studies concerning locations and routes, not too extensively however, as he does not want to be influenced by others' ideas beforehand. Afterwards, he performs wider research. In the presentation of his artwork, Fulton reduces the information to what is minimal, and that makes the few provided details significant and meaningful. In his case, a word can be turned into a series of images in spectators' minds. In other words, the text stirs the imagination and creates mental images of the experience.

Fulton's impact on the environment is not comparable with Smithson or Goldsworthy, as all he takes from his walks are occasional photographs, sometimes just one photograph can manifest out of a month's walk. His condensed experiences, when using only a word or two, are a poetical notion, and even the typography becomes significant and carries meaning, poetics of the mind.

65 Hamis Fulton. Lecture at Tate 10th April 2002. <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/hamish-fulton-walking-journey>

The inspiration for this project was Lauri Anttila's project: "*Hommage á Holmberg / The Pédofil Boa Vista, 1985-1986*" that influenced the formation of my method of combining art, science, and saunters with artwork from art history. In his project, Anttila follows landscape painter Gustaf Werner Holmberg's (1830-1860) travel routes in the Tavastia district and reads his diaries. Anttila's presentation of his study is in fragments that the viewer can use to construct an idea about Holmberg's practice through Anttila's interpretation. With Holmberg's documentation and collected image sequences, Anttila refers to time's presence as it appears to the observer moving in a landscape, or the ecological time.⁶⁶ *Hommage á Holmberg* is not the only inspiration for this project.

My practice which includes somatic experiences and performances are artworks itself, but this raises a question: *What is the experience then?* Experience is formed when the action is finished and it has an effect on the experiencer that leads to cognition and ideas through the reasoning process. This process creates knowledge, which is imagination tricked with somatic sensory perception. Dewey argues an artist that uses a certain place, scene or object as a subject for artistic processes is affected with personal previous experiences that creates subjective touch for the work. Therefore, all artworks are subjective products of the artists. (Art as Experience 1934)

Using a stone as the focus point, I want to experience its voice, which brings up an issue of communication. There are several artists who deal with communication with nature. For instance, Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) dealt with human-nature relations in his performance in a New York gallery: "*I like America and America likes me*" (May 1974).

Beuys spent three days in a room with a coyote wearing felt and a shepherd's stick as a barrier between them. The coyote's behaviour changed during the performance, becoming cautious, detached, aggressive, and sometimes companionable.⁶⁷ I see that Beuys's performance highlights the human-nature relationship and a situation of reconciliation, similar themes that I am dealing with in the stone project.

66 Johansson, Hanna. *Maataidetta Jäljittämässä: Luonnon Ja Läsnäolon Kirjoitusta Suomalaisessa Nykytaiteessa 1970-1995*. Helsinki: Like, 2005.

67 Beuys, Joseph. *Tate: Actions, Vitines, Environments: Room 4*. <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/joseph-beuys-actions-vitrines-environments/joseph-beuys-actions-4>

Other work where Beuys dealt with the human-nature relationship was his last and most ambitious work: *"7000 Oaks: City Forestation Instead of City Administration"* (1982-1987). Seven thousand oak trees were planted in Kassel, Germany as part of *documenta 7*. Each planted oak was accompanied by a basalt stone. "Beuys's concerted effort to physically, spiritually and metaphorically alter the city's social spaces – economic, political, and cultural, among others – is what finally constituted a community-wide "social sculpture" (Beuys's own terminology)."⁶⁸

The interesting detail of this work lies with the basalt rocks planted with the trees. Symbolically, basalt rocks are considered an effective grounding stone, supposedly strengthen the connection to mother earth, and shows Beuys's relation to the environment. "As a child, Beuys was fascinated by nature, obsessively cataloguing all the plants and wildlife in his area. At the same time, he was enthralled by northern myths and folklore, in which creatures are endowed with mystical power."⁶⁹

It seems that Beuys's personal experiences within nature and environment helped determine his art. As he demonstrated concern for ecological issues through his actions, he was one of the establishing figures behind the green movement.

With these presented artists and their working methods, I have described where my practice is situated within art's historical and theoretical context. In the next chapter I will introduce the methods I apply in my practice.

68 Beuys, Joseph. *The Art Story*. <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-beuys-joseph-artworks.htm>

69 Beuys, Joseph. *Tate: Actions, Vitrines, Environments: Room 4*. <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/joseph-beuys-actions-vitrines-environments/joseph-beuys-actions-4>

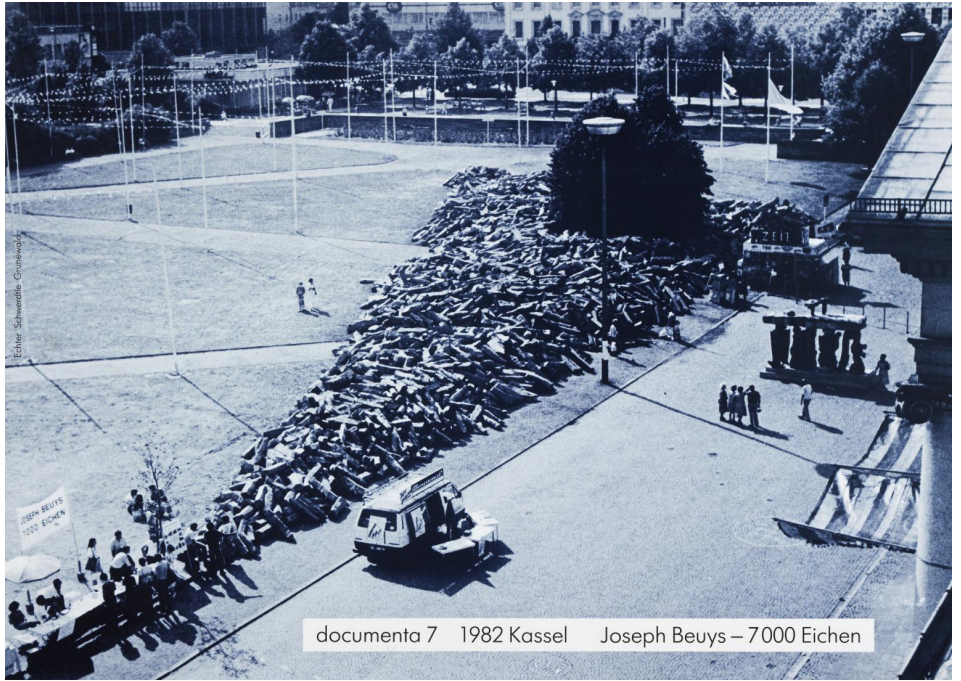


Image 12

7000 Oak Trees

Joseph Beuys 1982

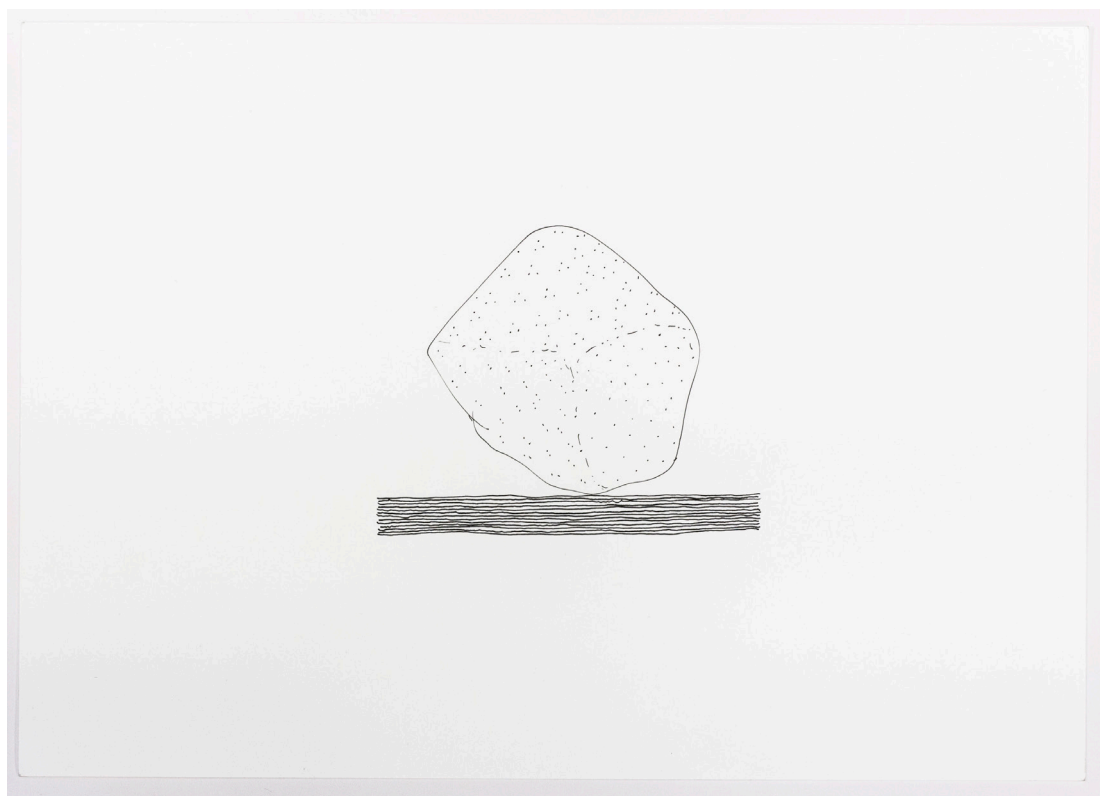


Image 13

Ascending

Ink drawing

Aleksi Jaakkola 2015

In this chapter I would like to outline the qualitative research methodology for this research and the methods I apply in the *Fieldwork*. In *PART I*, I introduced the art theory and philosophy behind my practice. Furthermore, the literature review focuses on analysing and interpreting material to find the story of the stone in the context of history, symbolism, geology, the painting, painter, and the process of making the painting –to try and find the answers to the question: *Why is the stone in the painting Kullervo's Curse?, and What kind of relationship did Axel Gallén have with the stone? What value did it carry for him?*

The literature review supports and provides the framework for the *Fieldwork*. But learning about the stone by reading second-hand experiences and interpretations of the stone's value, aesthetical or cultural, cannot give a comprehensive understanding of the stone. This is because it is also a stone-being, and as such it requires a first-hand experience to learn from the stone. Hopefully then, when all the parts can be interpreted as a whole, can the full narrative for the stone be formed and an answer given to the question: *Who is this stone?*

Fieldwork Methods

The *Fieldwork* consists of four visits to the stone in Huhkojärvi over a period of 2 years. The aim of these visits was to get closer to the stone and engage with the *stone-being*. The process is guided by somaesthetics, where the body is considered the central tool for gathering information. The process and interactions can result in various forms of output such as field notes, drawings, and photographs. The process of making art, intuitive or not, determined the path of the practice-based research process. The works generate a form of knowledge that only becomes known after interpretation. Then in turn, this added knowledge provides further context for future practice affecting the outcomes thereof. Thus it becomes a form of dialogue between the artist and the stone. Nevertheless, each work can only become truly meaningful and understood in correlation with each other as a whole and within the context of the overall research. Therefore, it is understood that *Sense of a Stone*, does not aim to create an object of art but rather is art as experience.

Body-apparatus

As philosophical grounding I choose to be in an awakened state for better experience by improving my sensuous and spiritual abilities accordingly as suggested by somaesthetics. As the body is the main tool for this project, the construction of perception has to be outlined, and perception derives from the objective senses such as hearing, sight, and touch. On the other hand, there are the subjective senses that are not dependent on mechanics but chemistry. Jacques Derrida argues that: “the senses of taste and smell are both more subjective than objective... Neither of the two senses can lead by itself to the cognition of the object without the help of one of the other senses”⁷⁰

70 Derrida, Jacques. “Economimesis.” *Continental aesthetics, Romanticism to Postmodernism: An Anthology: A Critical Reader*. Ed. by Richard Kearney and David Rasmussen. Malden (Mass.): Blackwell, 2001: 449.

With the objective senses (haptic/tactic) one perceives textures of surfaces, contour, pressure, humidity, and pain which requires the kinetic senses such as muscular awareness, skeletal or joint sensations that reflect the resistance of surfaces to form a heightened understanding (Arnold Berleant, Emily Brady).⁷¹ For example, physically moving in the environment, such as when climbing a hill, creates bodily awareness of space and mass that has the combination of all the senses.

In addition, proximity allows our senses to wander from one object to the next for more enhanced experiences, and accordingly, the speed or time spent at a location conveys a different kind of information. For example, a moss-covered rock could be smelled and touched which requires stopping.

Emily Brady argues that vision is the primary tool for perceptual exploration, because it can activate the usage of the others. She says: "Touch is one of the most intimate of all the senses. When we reach out to touch nature, it touches us back, if not intentionally."⁷² Brady continues: "With art, a lot depends on the ability of the artist to create an engaging and imaginative work of art. With nature, the character of the natural object significantly determines how much perceptual effort is required."⁷³ As the focus of my research is a natural object, the quality of the project depends on how close and immersed I manage to place myself in relation to it. Therefore, I decided to enhance my body's perceptual abilities so that I would be in a similar 'frequency' as the stone.

71 Berleant, Arnold. *Environment and the Arts: Perspectives On Environmental Aesthetics*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.

72 Brady, Emily. *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003: 125.

73 Brady, p.127.

Dreams

Dreams became a method for communicating with the stone after the third visit. Since then the dreams become a method. Author and artist Shaun McNiff explains dreams as a medium. He says: “The dream is a way of knowing and its stimulates responses and attempts to understand it that collaborate with other modes.”⁷⁴

Environmental anthropologist Hugo Reinert agrees with McNiff, and in his essay *About the Stone* (2016), he claims that dreams could be a means of communication with a natural object. Reinert has personal experience communicating with a stone. He developed a special relationship with one he was researching.

It was after my fieldwork when I got know of Reinert’s essay and found similarities with our projects. Reinert writes:

“What I am equipped to do, however, is to dwell on its persistent presence and to slow down, to question, to frame and explore the possibilities this presence offers for an otherwise, for alternatives to the present order.”⁷⁵

Nevertheless, Reinert asserts that he met the stone being in a dream: “[...]leaving aside the ontological status of informants encountered in dreams, the being in question said nothing of particular relevance here; I note the incident only in passing.”⁷⁶

Reinert continued to explain that when communication was established with the subject, the project took a new direction that consisted of a certain kind of dialogue with the stone. Earlier research and discovered information turned to understanding with the result that a connection started to form between separated topics and findings that would create a bigger narrative.

74 McNiff, Shaun. “Art-based Research.” *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues*. 2008: 36. https://www.moz.ac.at/files/pdf/fofoe/ff_abr.pdf

75 Reinert, Hugo. “About a Stone, Some Notes on Geologic Conviviality.” *Environmental Humanities* 8:1. May 2016: 105.

76 Reinert, p.107.

Autoethnography

I believe that reflective writing of experiences into written descriptions is not only a method of collecting data but also enables narrating something that cannot be pictured such as emotions and sensations. Thus, words can appear stronger than images and narration can act as an agent to interchange or cede the sensed sensations. However, it is a complex issue that involves aspects of language, semiotics, as well as personal preferences. Yet, it is a method to perform processing that the experience can transform into understanding, taking distance and putting it into perspective.

This method can be categorised as autoethnography.⁷⁷ In my case it includes writing descriptions, analysis, discussing learnings and observations. I also include photographs and audiovisual material that support the writing process as well as help the reader to enhance their perception compared to if they only read the written narrations.

“...a form of thinking characteristic of artistic practices, in which reliance on experience, the bodily and sensory human existence, the recognition of uniqueness, being immersed and enchanted by something, being vulnerable and being communicative are essential features.”⁷⁸ (Hannula on Varto 2008)

As the results are subjective, they should include a strong personal attachment as well the understanding that what it creates is personal. However, the aim of autoethnography is to produce understanding of what is reflected, and it could include areas that the author does not have knowledge of, and with this method those gaps could be filled with speculative and intuitive connections. For example, when dealing with metaphysical phenomenon. “...it is knowledge that arises from inside a world, in a situation from which there is no escape and which has an inescapable aspect of emergency.”⁷⁹ (Hannula on Varto 2008)

77 Autoethnography – a qualitative research method that combines characteristics of ethnography and autobiography – is gaining momentum within the creative and performing arts as a research tool, partly because of the opportunity it provides for writers, artists, performers and others to reflect critically upon their personal and professional creative experiences.

Pace Steven, Writing the self into research: Using grounded theory analytic strategies in autoethnography, www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue13/Pace.pdf,

78 Hannula, Mika. *Artistic Research Methodology: Narrative, Power, and the Public*. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2014: 61.

79 Hannula, p.61.

Photography

I have started my journey as an artist with photography. Through that medium, I have found myself in various places, being an observer and sensing different environments from urban to wilderness. The moment of hearing the click of the shutter is unique; it is a realization of time, a precise juncture in the past. The moment of separation, the cause of actions on set location. The framing, the angle, the perspective, and the intensity of light –now they are a vision of surrounding reality.

The camera objectifies the landscape and distances oneself from the subjective presence. It works similarly to philosophical discourse, giving a distance. The beauty of the photography medium comes from the interaction between the photographer, technology, and the image.

There are many stages in a photograph. The procedure includes framing, timing, atmospheric qualities, and manoeuvring the technology before entering the image processing. After the processing steps, the image goes under investigation and systematic procedures before it will be ready for presentation. Every stage requires several decisions, until it finally has to be decided to what context the image will be attached. The other issues include what kind of information the captured image conceals? And is there intelligence that the photographer never intended to apprehend?

Accordingly, the possibilities of photography vary, for example, from being an instrument used in nature sciences to a tool for artistic expressions. I am fond of the idea that each photograph can conceal something that surprises afterward, something which has gone unnoticed at first, and also of the possibility that the image can be maneuvered later. Tuula Närhinen emphasises that it is easy to forget the instrumental aspects of the photo camera when the tension focuses on the received image.⁸⁰ Yet, the image also offers a new terrain and journey. Photography is a cluster of possibilities, like the landscape.

80 Närhinen, Tuula. *Kuvatiede ja luonnontaide; tutkielma luonnonilmiöiden kavllisuudesta*. Helsinki: Taideyliopiston Kuvataideakatemia, 2016: 253.

“You shall not enter,” says the stone.

“You lack the sense of taking part.

No other sense can make up for your missing sense of taking part.

Even site heightened to become all-seeing

will do you no good without a sense of taking part.

You shall not enter, you have only a sense of what that sense should be,
only its seed, imagination.”

– Wislawa Szymborska, *Conversation with a Stone*, 1962.

PART II

Fieldwork



Image 14

Saana Mountain

Aleksi Jaakkola 2013

The path to the stone started from Kilpisjärvi in 2013.

A lake caught my attention, seen from the high ground on Saana mountain. The appearance of the lake resembled the shape of an arrow. Significantly, the *Arrow lake* became the centre of my attention. My interconnection to the lake cumulated into a performative intervention: I spent several minutes in the ice cold water, alone, in the middle of the tundra in hypothermic conditions.

The foremost thing from Saana was that I was given a route or direction to follow that I learned from the *Arrow lake*. I began to follow the direction where the arrow was pointing until I found Noitatunturi at the Pyhätunturi mountain range. I felt that this was the location where I needed to go.

On the southeast slope of Saana Mountain, I found a stone and placed my camera to take video footage, but then I noticed several animal bones lying on the stone. In an instant, my legs became entangled and I landed on soft vegetation. I discretely said sorry for the disturbance, and I took my camera. The bones indicated that there had been recent activities concerning old traditions and practices. That stone was 'sieidi,' a place for gifts and offerings for local deities and spirits.

I learned two significant points from the Saana visit. First, at the *Arrow lake* I established a connection through immersive performance and got directions. Second, it was a reminder that some stones are special, and when dealing with them an appropriate consideration should be applied.

It was August in 2015 when I followed *the Arrow's* direction from Kilpisjärvi to the *Pyhä* mountain range in the municipality of Pelkosenniemi,⁸¹ or more precisely Noitatunturi. The purpose of the voyage was to follow the lead and determine why I was pointed there.

81 Pyhä or Pyhätunturi, consists various mountains. Their names are. Isokero: big mountain, Kultakero: Gold mountain, Ukonhattu: old man's hat as well Ukko means the high deity of skies, Noitatunturi: means witch mountain and its former name was Seitakero meaning a sacred mountain and a place of worship. Laakakero: flat mountain, Peurakero: venison mountain.

At the summit of Noitatunturi was a bush-like Rowan tree accompanied by a sign post with names and distances and numerous stone piles. I reasoned that some of them were 'sieidi' (worship stones) as the mountain's former name indicates (seitakero).

At the foot of the mountain I noticed a white dot on the side of the Noitatunturi before climbing up. I thought it could be a remnant of snow from the previous winter, but after the warm summer that was not likely. Before leaving the summit, I noticed a white stone looking like a sugar cube on the east-north side of the mountain. The size was considerable and it looked remarkable within its surroundings. There it was, the same white dot, now as a distinctive white stone.

I believe that the name of the mountain (both previous and present) indicates the attachment of old animistic beliefs concerning the mountain, especially due to the fact that there were numerous stone piles that served as places of offerings. When reviewing the listing of the prehistoric, stone and bronze age findings of human activities in the Pelkosenniemi municipality, I realized the place has a long history, and therefore the place names could echo past functions.⁸²

When it comes to my interpretation of *the white stone*, by its distinct colour and size, it could have been seen as a special object in the past with a function. For the material qualities of the stone I have come to conclusion that the stone is Milky quartz, and in Finnish it is called 'Ukonkivi' (old man's stone or high deity's stone). Historically milky quartz was used to make sparks with firesteel and it has been connected to fertility magic.⁸³

Afterthoughts

To share some afterthoughts and summarise my excursion, the lake at Saana caught my attention and similarly *the white stone* made itself exposed at Pyhä. The meaning and connections between these findings will become clear. I connect the white stone to the same old traditions continuing at Saana. As a result, the path to the stone is filled with animistic beliefs, long history, and echoes of past life. Next I will find out what emerges from the stone's location.

82 National Board of Antiquities. https://www.kyppi.fi/palveluikkuna/mjreki/read/asp/r_kohde_list.aspx

83 Johanson, Kristiina. "The Changing meaning of 'Thunderbolts'." *Folklore, An Electronic Journal of Folklore*, Vol.42. 2009: 148.



Image 15

Worship stone in Noitatunturi

Aleksi Jaakkola 2015



Image 16

Arrow Lake I

Aleksi Jaakkola 2013



Image 17

Arrow Lake II

Aleksi Jaakkola 2013



Image 18

White Stone

Aleksi Jaakkola 2015



Image 19

Twisted Tree

Aleksi Jaakkola 2015



Image 20

Lake Huhkojärvi

Aleksi Jaakkola 2015

The stone is located in the centre of Finland, in Keuruu in the Municipality of Keski-Suomi. After discovering the stone's existence, I have visited the location on four separate occasions. The first and second times were for scouting and getting to know the stone, measuring the physical characteristics, and making sure that the stone will be a target of my intentness. The third visit differs from the two previous as it was immersive and interactive when the premade plans and actions were executed. The fourth and final visit was for researching backgrounds and meeting people.

Following are the reports from each visit, documentation of the process and presentation of outcomes. This includes autoethnographic reports for reflection on the experience, practice and process, and photographs, sketches, and interviews. Although the outcomes of these processes can be assessed independently, they can only become truly meaningful after they have been interpreted as parts of the whole process and research.



Image 21

The Stone – Visit I

Aleksi Jaakkola 2014

VISIT I **Finding The Stone**

Lake Huhkojärvi, formerly known as Jamajärvi.

It was late December 2014. The snow had not arrived yet.
On the westbound shore, on top of a slope stood a stone.

The aim for first visit was to find the stone. Prior to the visit I searched on the internet to get the coordinates to the stone. After calling a local newspaper Suur-Keuruu, I was directed to contact Keuruu Museum for more thorough information. The amanuensis told me that the stone is part of the local identity and history, however it is not well known amongst the local people. From the museum I received contact details for a lady with particular interest in the stone; she had been the driving force to get the stone protected due to the sales of the land. I contacted the lady, and during our phone conversation I received instructions to find the stone. As I set out to locate the stone and the closer I got to it, more anxious I became, a mixture of excitement, fear, pleasure, expectation, and a feeling that something was about to happen –a feeling similar to butterflies in the stomach before performance.

The stone was not easily found, even though it was only fifteen meters away from the road. Without the old lady's instructions, I would not have found it. Finally, there it was, the stone. It was positioned on top of a small slope leading down towards the Lake Huhkojärvi and was partially hidden by trees. I observed that the stone had a beautiful cap of thick moss, and on the left side was a wooden T-shaped sign saying Kullervon Kivi (Kullervo's Stone), written in black letters. The text was hardly visible indicating that the sign had been there for some time.

Also, similar to the Kullervo's Curse painting, a small Rowan tree was located next to the stone, and the lake was also visible. The stone appeared mirrored compared to the painting.

During the inspection I observed that the forest had been thinned few years back. On the ground were marker sticks close to the stone, and in distance there were paint traces, indicating that the marked area was for sale. Aesthetically the location looked like ordinary forest with the variety of trees.

The Lake Huhkojärvi was quiet. The other side's shoreline was not far away as it is a small lake, and I saw farm buildings and cottages and reflections on the water's surface. It grew dark and I said goodbye to the stone and told it I would come back the next day.

The next day started with sketching and measuring the dimensions of the stone. I photographed and recorded video footage. While I was there I had various thoughts and ideas concerning the project with the stone. The initial plan to 'borrow' the stone and place it in a museum was in my mind. I measured the distance where a crane or other lifting device could reach the stone, and I was estimating the weight and how to lift the stone.

While doing this, I recalled stories I had learned while living in Iceland when I became aware of beliefs in hidden people and elves that live in stones, along with, stories of how disturbing their homes could have unfortunate consequences. Then I remembered my experience at Saana, the stone with bones.

With that memory in my mind, I realised if I were to move the stone, I should make sure of its qualities and deal with it accordingly—consultancy would be needed. At the end of the visit, I was talking to the stone and had an offering to give.



Image 22

The Stone – 14th of December 2014

Aleksi Jaakkola 2014



Image 23

The Stone – 15th of December 2014

Aleksi Jaakkola 2014

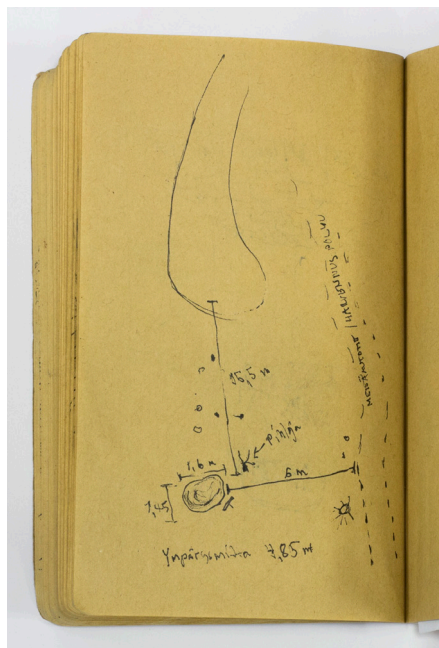


Image 24

Kullervon Kivi sign

Aleksi Jaakkola 2015

Image 25

Measurements – sketchbook

Aleksi Jaakkola 2014

Afterthoughts

Through the first visit, I found potential collaborators for the project and further investigated how to transport the stone. However, I started to have doubts about moving the stone. I reasoned that the idea was questionable and could prove provocative towards the stone. In addition, moving the stone could bring publicity that could turn against the project. When discussing the matter with scholars and supervisors at the University, valid questions were asked concerning my goals and intentions. Slowly, the initial idea of moving the stone started to feel less and less inviting, and I started to consider alternative plans that still involved the stone.

At this point I was unsure about the future direction of the project and about whether moving the stone was a good idea and if it correlated with my practice. However, before I would make the decision to continue the project or to find another focus, I felt a need to visit the stone again.



Image 26

The Stone – Visit II

Aleksi Jaakkola 2014

VISIT II **Focus & Continuity**

The second visit was the day after the summer solstice of 2015.
The reason for this visit was to decide the fate of the project.

It was a foggy midsummer morning. I arrived in Huhkojärvi around six o'clock in the morning. Nature was still resting, the lake was calm and birds were singing. White fog softened the sunlight and the air was light, the humidity in the air made everything fresh. I was captivated by this mystical moment, and I could relate to the artists before me in the same place enjoying similar moments.

I came to the conclusion that I could not disrupt this place and the stone.

*This experience convinced me to continue with the project, only in a less intrusive manner, more *modus operandi*.*

I enjoyed the peaceful moment in the morning mist by Huhkojärvi and documented the scenery and soundscape until it was time to leave, and I sensed that the stone agreed with the new direction of my plans.



Image 27

Lake Huhkojärvi

Aleksi Jaakkola 2015

Aftherthoughts

Was it possible that the stone played a role in this diversion, my change of mind? The new objective still had to be formed, however I wanted to investigate the stone from a cultural perspective and dig as deep as I could into the subject matter.



Image 28

The Stone – Visit III

Aleksi Jaakkola 2016

VISIT III **Experience with the Stone**

The third visit had been planned for over a year, and finally I was ready. The aim of the visit was to confirm the possible presence of an animistic being to support my theory of Axel Gallén's perception of the stone, and if that was the case, trying to establish a dialogue with the being to learn more about it. There were two participants of this exploration, the author and a fellow artist and seeress, in role as a mediator. After a period of boosting my physical and mental being, expectations were high, and the excitement intensified as the visit drew closer.

In my mind circulated questions: *Who is this stone? Is there an animistic-spiritual being within the stone? If there is, is it kind or hostile? Would it like to communicate with me? Is this dangerous? How can this affect me?*

With plenty of questions the long-awaited visit took place on the 1st of October in 2016.

It was a Saturday afternoon, and the air was full of autumn odours. There were a few drops of water from the light grey sky with a slight wind that did not reach down to the mossy ground level.

The stone was located on a small slope leaning towards Lake Huhkojärvi, which is approximately one hundred meters from the stone. There were tracks of forestry machines visible due to harvesting in recent years. The terrain was easily passable and most of the trees appeared to be less than a hundred years old. There were various types of trees; rowan, birch, aspen, and the most dominant were the spruce trees.

There was a group of smaller rocks around the stone, some almost completely hidden under moss. They formed some unity within the formation including the stone. Next to it was a wooden sign with two sticks attached, looking like a capital letter T.

On my previous visits the sign said 'Kullervon kivi' with lettering nearly faded away, and now written in black was simply: 'Kivi' (stone).

The shape of the stone was oval, round, and its top was covered with a thick layer of moss. The lower part had various species of lichen. The stone was resting on top of smaller rocks. The overall assessment of the aesthetics is that it was delightful, sympathetic, and a relatively small stone for being an erratic boulder (roughly 1,55 x 1,56 x 1,80 meters).

With open minds and heightened senses we approached the stone, sensing, observing, and feeling. A drumming was done as part of an approaching method and to awaken the stone. As the drumming stopped we heard ravens. After slowly advancing towards the stone, we offered the stone an offering – a small amount of spirit poured onto the stone.

After the welcoming performance, we went to the lake for an overall view of the site. When back at the stone, the acoustic qualities of the stone were tested by banging with a small, hand palm-sized rock. A little resonance was detected, indicating that there were hollow areas inside, and according to the echo they are small.

Later, the seeress chanted nature awakening rhymes and sang ‘joik’, which is based in the Karelian tradition, similar to that of the the ‘Sami’.

After becoming more familiar with the stone, I performed a pre-meditated intervention: I sought physical contact with the stone by lying gently on top of it, with my face against the soft moss. I lay there comfortably for a few minutes, embracing the stone. The act was a symbolic gesture about connectedness, or at least it was through physical means.

At last, I took a colour positive photograph of the stone. I felt that an image taken when these rituals and connection attempts were in action could reveal part of the significance of the experience as well, and I hoped to capture the aural qualities of the stone and its location. I reasoned that the radiating light rays would have a physical effect on the film and could contain echoes of the place and its occupant – capture its spirit.



Image 29

Awakening the Stone

Stills from video documentation

Aleksi Jaakkola 2016



Image 30

Embracing the Stone

Intervention documentation

Aleksi Jaakkola 2016

Afterthoughts

It can be concluded that there was knowledge about the stone's existence as the text on the wooden sign has been fixed.

The main outcome of the research trip was learning that the stone had an animistic attachment giving a feeling that it is feminine and had no detected negative energies. The stone was part of a group of rocks at the location, and together they formed a unity. A significant finding was that thirty to fifty meters away from the stone stands a tall and thick aspen tree that attracted the seeress's attentiveness. The tree sends stronger signals than the stone does. In another observation, we noted that there seems to be a small opening between the ground and the belly of the stone on its south side. According to folk tradition, the hole could indicate the presence of hidden people or sprites, and it could be an entrance to their home. The seeress warned not to eat anything if invited into their home.

The role of my associate was to help confirm my suspicions regarding the qualities of the stone, and if confirmed, to help me start a conversation or other communicative relationship with the being. Despite my enhanced sensitiveness, I did not experience anything out of the ordinary. The strongest sensation was the internal excitement and nervousness prior to the performances. However, the situation and the moments of interrelations with the place and the stone turned out to be a strong aural experience with wind sounds, echoing stone banging, drumming, chanting, nature spells, and not forgetting the ravens heard both at the beginning and end of the visit. On the whole, it was a profoundly unforgettable experience.

Some time later, while listening to the audio recordings from the expedition I observed a peculiar occurrence: whenever we interacted with the stone, the wind grew and rippled through the leaves on the trees. It was noticeable when listening to the audio recording later.

I did not address the stone with any specific question. However, I did talk to the stone with manners similar to earlier visits. The feelings afterwards were puzzling, and I wondered if there would be some kind of dialogue between us. The seeress suggested that communication could happen through various mediums and advised that I follow my dreams especially well after the visit. That very next night I experienced a vivid dream.

Dream, October 2nd 2016.

I was in the dream, situated at a ticket hall in a railway station – big wooden service desks, high ceiling, and green colour – that reminded me slightly of the Helsinki train station.

I approach the service desk where an old lady was working and hand her my student card to receive a discount. She walks away and leaves the card behind on the desk. Before leaving she says that she has more urgent things to do. I realise that the service desk's curtain was being lowered, and the lady does not return. I keep standing there and waiting for service and help to retrieve my card from behind the desk.

I find two boxes on the desk, and to kill time I open them. The first had a few small dice. The second box contained three coins.

Trying to get attention, I dropped the coins on top of each other to make a clicking sound. When I ran out of coins, I continue with thin metal rings.

Suddenly I realise that many young girls had appeared in front of the service desk where my card was, but it was not the same lady behind it. I was trying to call for my card, but a long queue was quickly forming. I was left out of the line, unnoticed and felt like an outsider. I woke up...

Usually I do not remember my dreams, but this time it was different. In my interpretation of the dream, the stone 'being' was signalling that it had more urgent things to do than communicate with me. At the time, I interpreted it as a partial rejection. However, then the dialogue slowly started.

In my dream I felt that the stone had rejected me, at first. However, later I sensed that the relationship enhanced, as I experienced more dreams where I was in the presence of formless figures. Once I dreamed I was visiting a dark space, seemingly a non-structural space or void. I sensed indistinguishable beings. I felt a connection forming in this dream and others that followed, and it started to feel intimate and personal – the line between the project and my private life began to blur.

To conclude the third visit, it confirmed my speculation regarding the special characteristic of the stone. I had also accomplished the other goal of the visit, to establish communications with the stone, even though I was rejected, or at least partially rejected as I interpreted the first dream. I received answers to my questions and felt that I could end this project at this point, however a new phase was set in motion when new dreams occurred and I felt that the stone wanted to have a conversation after all.

After what had happened and the consequences from the visit, I wanted to investigate further. I wanted to have a greater picture of the stone by researching backgrounds and other leads. Most importantly, I desired to know what the stone was telling me, and whether the journeys were meant to happen. Maybe the stone had another agenda.



Image 31

An offering for a Stone

Ink drawing

Alexsi Jaakkola 2014

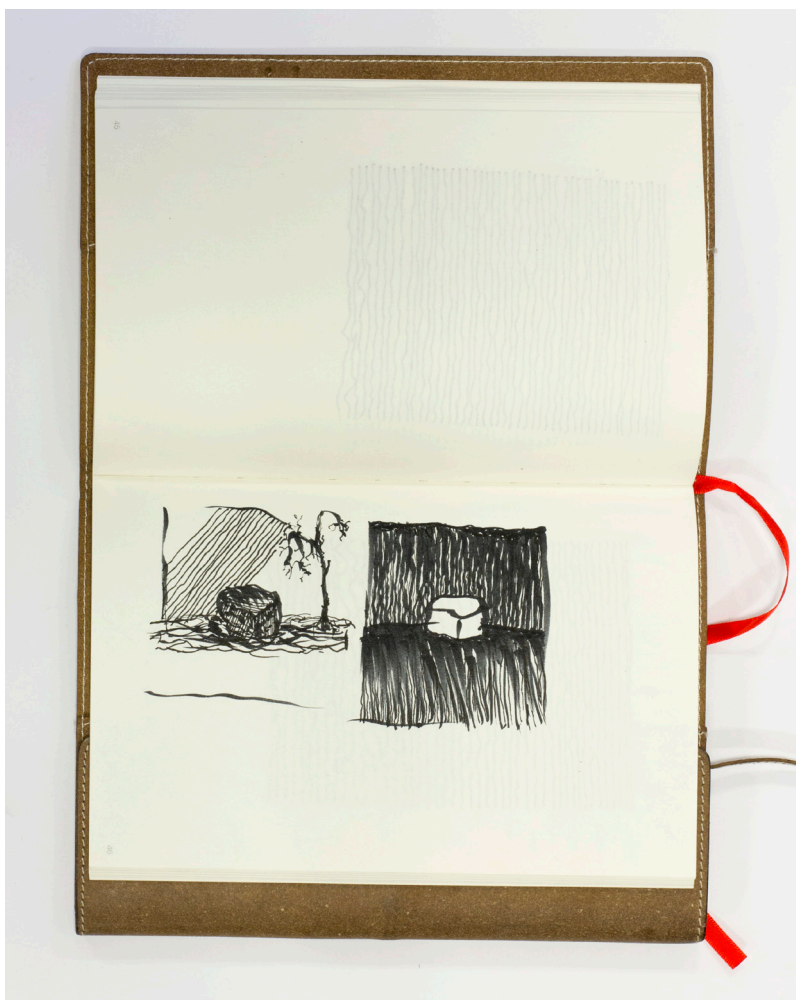


Image 32

Connecting stones

Sketchbook drawings

Alexsi Jaakkola 2015



Image 33

The Stone – Visit IV

Aleksi Jaakkola 2016

VISIT IV **Finding Backgrounds**

The theme of the fourth visit was to gather pieces of information that could support my earlier findings as well finding new important aspects. I chose to conduct unstructured interviews in the form of discussions.

The appointments took place between the 3rd and 5th of December in 2016, stretching from Jyväskylä city to Keuruu and Huhkola at Lake Huhkojärvi.

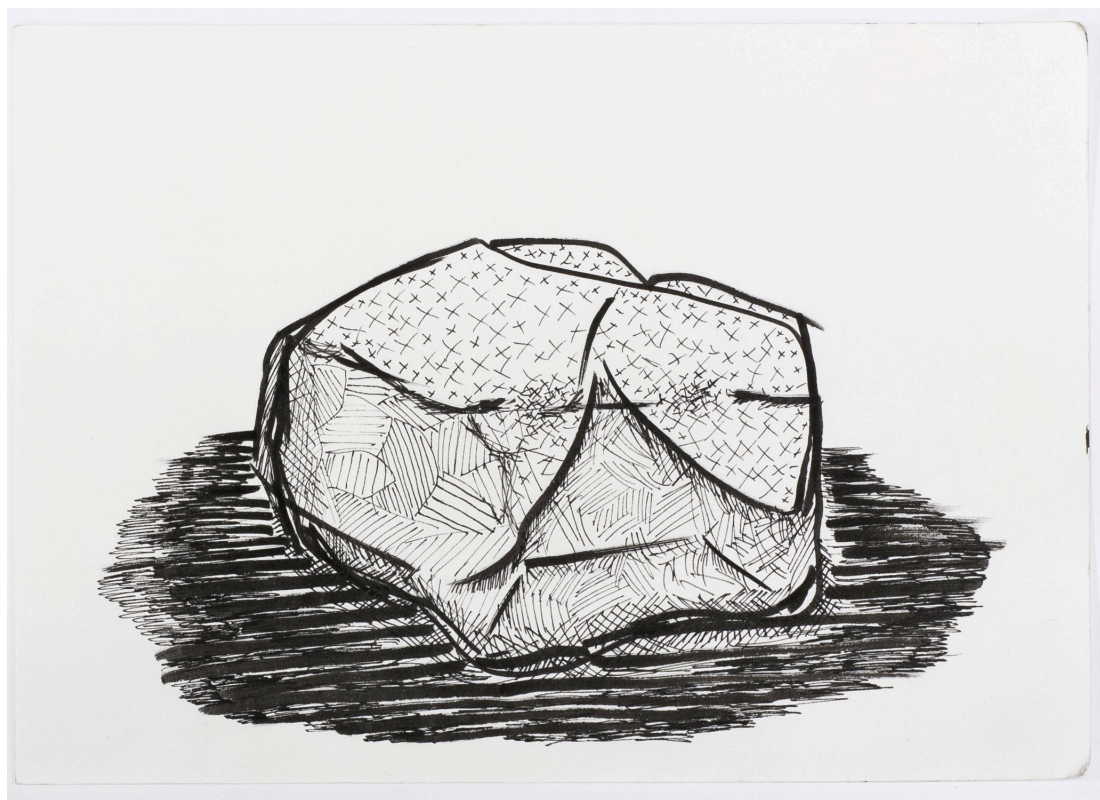


Image 34

Stone surfaces

Ink drawing

Aleksi Jaakkola 2014

1. Conversation with Kirsi Neuvonen

I had an appointment with graphic artist Kirsi Neuvonen at her studio in Jyväskylä on December 3rd, 2016. Through internet research I found her citation of the stone and its location in reference to Axel Gallén. Her connection to Lake Huhkojärvi was through her parents who owned a place at Huhkola, and she had spent time there in her early adulthood. At present, she has a summer cottage by the lake. The following information and statements are based on our conversation.

Keuruu is a cultural place, where many well-known people originated, and there have been many visitors throughout history who are important to Finnish culture.

Various artists have visited and worked there, which adds value to the place (Keuruu). There is an interesting connection between the Huhkojärvi lake and Kalevala. Hence, the landscape in 'Kullervo's Curse' originates from there, and painter Hannu Väisänen was housed there in the same place when he was working with Kalevala illustrations for a new edition.

The new Kalevala was printed at Otava Publishing in Keuruu. The company is one reason why cultural people came to the region. Moreover, Neuvonen mentioned many known people who are connected to Keuruu.

She did not recognize any particular role for the stone other than its connection to Axel Gallén. Nevertheless, she concluded that Huhkojärvi and the region incorporate some inexplicable magnetism that has attracted a variety of creatives and have many cultural layers. Metaphorically the stone is a permanent figure whilst the trees and surroundings change over the time, representing a persistent cultural history in an ever-changing world.

2. Conversation with Ritva Saukkomaa

On the second day, December 4th, 2016, I had an appointment with Ritva Saukkomaa at Lake Huhkojärvi where she lives. Before our meeting, I went to see the stone, and the ravens made themselves heard. The following report is based on conversation while we were reviewing books and articles together.

Ritva Saukkomaa is locally active and was behind the plan to get the stone protected. During her early years, she lived in artist Onni Oja's birth home, and later she was one of the organisers who renovated the house when it was turned into a residency where artist Hannu Väisänen stayed, as mentioned earlier. She also arranged the sign which stands by the stone with text 'Kullervon kivi'. She was the one who gave me directions to the stone when visiting there the first time.

Saukkomaa has an extensive collection of books and articles in connection with Axel Gallén, his life and ties to Keski-Suomi (center of Finland). She knew that Axel Gallén had a local guide, Heikki Pitkälä, while staying at Ekola croft. Pitkälä took Axel and Sparre for hunting trips and fishing at Keurusselkä lake. She presented an article from Keski-suomalainen from the year 1941, where Pitkälä was interviewed and asked about Axel Gallén and what they did there.⁸⁴ The article stated that there were rumours that "Gallén had skills to conjure up spirits and see through people, for example, to say if someone is a Communist or such..."⁸⁵

Many scholars and researchers have visited her regarding local knowledge, such as Janne Gallén-Kallela-Sirén, the key people from Keuruu Museum, Jyväskylä Art Museum, and Jyväskylä University to mention a few. Also, in summer 2016 Serlachius Museum showed interest in Huhkojärvi in relation to new research on Axel Gallén.

84 Lemminkäinen, Tapani. "'Kaleenin' ja 'Parren' erätoveri." *Keski-suomalainen* 26.4.1941.

85 "Niillä seuduilla, missä Gallén on liikkunut, tavataan kansan keskuudessa monasti käsitys, että hänellä oli kyky manata henkiä, >> nähdä ihmisten läpi>>, esim. Suoralta kädeltä kuka oli kommunisti t.m.s." *Keski-suomalainen* 26.4.1941.

When discussing the stone, she told the story of how it was found. The stone became acknowledged again around twenty years ago. First, a group of artists came to Huhkojärvi to paint, and at one point they decided to try to find the stone. They borrowed rowing boats and went around the lake investigating the lake shores without luck. At that point, there was no knowledge of the stone's location.

Then many years after the artist tried to find the stone, it was located and identified by Janne Gallen-Kallela-Sirén with the assistance of local historian Kosti Olkkola (1942-2006). Ritva's son went to photograph the stone with directions from Olkkola, and then some time later she visited the place.

Afterward, local planning included permission to build summer cottages on the west shore of the lake, including the land where the stone lies. Ritva contacted the Keuruu Museum in order to get the stone protected, and an initiative was sent to Ympäristökeskus ELY (Centre of Environment). The stone did not gain recognition as a historical object and did not achieve a protective status. The only good outcome was that whoever acquired the land was required to leave the stone untouched. Ritva remarked that it would not take much for a digging machine to 'accidentally' knock the stone down. The land was still untouched when this visit took place.

When discussing life in the past and events around Huhkojärvi, Ritva mentioned social gatherings, activities, volunteerings, and dances were popular happenings, and they were many. The old good days, and now people just watch television.

Furthermore, she told about the first time she visited the stone, how she felt that "something was there" and that it was a special place. Besides, "the stone is not just an ordinary stone," she said with a grin on her face.



Image 35

The Stone – 5 minute exposure

Aleksi Jaakkola 2016

3. Keuruu Museum

The third visit was to the Keuruu Museum. Before heading to the Museum, I visited the stone once again and took a long exposure photograph.

At the Keuruu Museum, I had an appointment with museum director Ritva Pulkkinen and assistant manager Teija Lammi. First I presented my project concerning the stone.

The reason for the visit was that I wanted to determine if the museum had knowledge about the stone other than in connection to Axel Gallén. Moreover, I was interested in Huhkojärvi lake's prehistory, if there were archaeological findings or other indications that would link the stone to pre-historical times. Although archaeological remains have been found from the Keuruu region that date back to the stone and iron ages, but there were none from the Huhkojärvi lake. As Keuruu is located along lake routes that connect many regions, it is assumed that people have inhabited or moved through the region for an extended time period.

I was told that there has been recent interest in Akseli Gallén-Kallela in relation to Keuruu and Huhkojärvi. To conclude, there has not been any particular regards towards the stone nor any investigation to shed light on whether the stone has any other cultural bearing, e.g. if there are sacrificial holes hiding under the moss.

What I saw at the museum hanging on the wall was the famous Gallén's rug. The rug has followed him and makes an appearance in many of his paintings. It originates from Keuruu and is a special wedding rug that symbolises marriage and new life. I discovered that he had brought it with him to Paris and then back to Finland. On other words, he had a piece of Keuruu with him. The rug was on loan from the Akseli Gallén-Kallela Museum, Espoo.



Image 36

Past the Stone

Aleksi Jaakkola 2014

Afterthoughts

The methods of these research visits were conversational/dialectic. I did not want to create a formal situation with an unbalanced interviewer and an interview setting with a list of questions. Instead, we discussed freely. On two occasions, with Neuvonen and Saukkonen I used an audio recorder, and at the museum, notes. It seems that the stone is an unearthed topic.

The people with whom I had conversations during this fourth visit affirmed, in their opinion, that Axel Gallén was the main reason for the existing value and awareness of the stone. In geological and historical contexts Gallén was one of the many artists that visited and stayed in Keuruu in the past. In the context of Keuruu, people from different times and backgrounds create an essential network that has affected the culture and identity of the place, reaching through time and the country. Therefore, the region is the heart of the Finland in many aspects.

Concerning the future of the stone and the potential threats it faces, I noted that the stone will take care of itself and a suitable owner for the land will be found. However, what if I am wrong and the stone is asking for help? Could it be that it is the stone that has been summoning me, rather than me discovering the stone?

Summary of the Fieldwork

To refine the fieldworks method I went to Saana and Pyhätunturi. At first I did not see a connection between them and the stone. However, later it became clear that they have their places in the ontological narrative. Nevertheless, the workshop in Kilpisjärvi was the very beginning of my studies, as it was there I was introduced to Saana mountain and found the 'Arrow' lake that leads to the stone that is the focus of my final work at the school.

The main aspect acquired from the first location was the awareness of metaphysical aspects of the natural world and a given sign/direction to follow the pointer to Pyhätunturi. Nevertheless, the project culminates at Huhkojärvi where the stone is located.

The structure of the study of the stone's location is divided into four separate visits: the first, finding the stone; the second, defining the project focus and continuity; the third, immersive activities establishing connection and dialogue between the stone and me; and the fourth visit, finding backgrounds, increasing the amount of knowledge about the stone, the location, the place, and the region.

The primary aim of the first visit was to locate the stone and to determine how to transport it. I became aware that the stone should be consulted if moving it. The second visit became one of the major turning points of the project. I decided to abandon the attempt at moving the stone and shifted the emphasis to the stone itself. The third visit was the highlight or turning point and the most substantial part of the project. The visit was well prepared, I enhanced my perceptive abilities, having a mediator and a premeditated plan for intervention. The outcome of the visit was the knowledge that the stone is/possesses a feminine quantity with positive or good energy. This finding supported the hypothesis that Axel Gallén recognised the stone's essence and characteristics as special. If the stone's special character could be identified today, then it is justified to think that there was something back then in Gallén's time.

The aftermath of the third visit was that communication or dialogue emerged between the stone and me. The conveying happened through dreams, intuition, and proceeded in connecting ideas and information together.

The fourth visit concentrated on enhancing the knowledge around the stone from other sources. The insight from that visit was that the stone has not been studied in depth and that it has value locally, mainly due to Axel Gallén. Moreover, the visit supported the idea that the stone has a presence.

To summarise the main outcome from the practice-based fieldworks, I state that this project has changed me, both my physical and mental being. My attitude towards nature and nature-beings has changed to be more respectful and considerate. When thinking about the stone, I have shown its qualities and gained an understanding communication through non-human languages. I have changed from perceiver/observer to interpreter/meditator.

Essence of the Stone

The process and the journey are already results in themselves. As a presentation that sums the whole experience, I contribute a photograph, *The Stone Essence* (image 38), captured during the third visit at Huhkojärvi. The image presents the stone-being in its natural surroundings.

Image 37

The Stone Essence

Aleksi Jaakkola 2016



PART III

Conclusion



Image 38

Stone Collage

Aleksi Jaakkola 2016

The questions: *What is the story behind the stone in Kullervo's Curse? Who is the stone? What can the stone tell me?*

In this concluding chapter, the project analysis and reflection are outlined and there is a review of the results from the research produced by applied practice-based methods combined with literary research. There is also discussion concerning how these two techniques combined work together for gaining knowledge.

After I could tell the story in relation to the main question: what is the story behind the stone in *Kullervo's Curse*?, the process of learning from the stone itself began, which brought new questions. *What can I learn from it? What can the stone tell me?* These questions came after I learned that the stone should be seen as a 'being' in an active sense and that we are on equal ground. With this attitude, communication was established that helped form ideas about what the stone is telling me.

During the process of the thesis, issues of interconnectivity and the valuation of the knowledge became critical subjects to me that I had to deal with. In addition, my quest to follow emerging leads during the process had its own complications resulting in many little side tracks needed to gain a better understanding of the whole. Following I will reflect on and present my findings with discussion and valuation.

The second aim of the research was to create the new narrative for the stone, and it suggests focus on what the stone wants to tell us rather than how we want to see it –what we can learn from the stone rather than about it. With the new narrative a new layer has been created in relation to the stone.

Before concluding my findings from the qualitative research as a whole, I will discuss the insight learned through the practice-based part and results that lead me to deal with the lack of interconnectivity and the division between human and non-human realms.

Is there a value that this project has created? After discussing the interpretation and then analysing the new knowledge, the strengths and limitations are discussed. Finally, in the conclusion possible future directions are presented.

Reflections

Having twofold research helped fill information gaps and questions for each. Without textual research I would not understand the artist and historical backgrounds as well as the stones in general. In similar fashion, without going to the location I would not have learned the qualities of the stone nor have established communications. Therefore, having twofold research helped fill information gaps and questions for each part.

Hence, what is the stone telling us and what does it stand for?

Accordingly, the assumption that Axel Gallén was aware of the stone's animistic being and had created a connection with it has led to this interpretative story of what the stone is telling:

The stone tells the story of human culture, starting from a cosmological beginning to the present. Consequently, in the painting, the Rowan tree next to the stone symbolises the 'marriage' of feminine and masculine, 'maanemo' and 'Ukko', mother earth and high god, which connects the stone to the catalytic events of the meteorites striking the earth, bringing life and the essential elements for culture to flourish. The cultural development is linked to the technologies to manoeuvre the iron, which is connected to the mythical Sampo and its celestial origin. Therefore the stone tells a story of the human culture and how it flourished and brought wealth.

The new perspectives that I found about the *Kullervo's Curse* painting are based on my interpretations, as I did not restrict myself from following unorthodox leads. One such lead brought me to a hypothetical conclusion that Axel Gallén attempted to conceal the essence of the stone's 'being' into the *Kullervo's Curse* painting. However, whether he tried to do so, let alone managed, can only be postulated and only the artist himself could tell. The painting's popularity and how it has been valued gives an idea. The painting is seen as one of the key Kalevala depictions, which speaks on behalf of the attachment. All this comes to the place where the artist spent around a year alltotal, Lake Huhkojärvi.

The painting's landscape has been identified as Huhkojärvi in Keuruu. During my textual research I noticed that the landscape itself is lacking analytical examination in connection to geographical location. As my focus was the stone, naturally the location followed.

However, the stone is the only distinguishable nature-object I recognize that appears in the painting. Hence, it provided a base for my fieldworks and led me to the idea that Gallén established a connection with the stone. As my research demonstrates, he was trying to establish a connection within nature and its beings (Kokkinen, 2011), and it also shows that the local people remembered him as possessing special skills and that he could see things (Lemminkäinen, 1941). The Ekola croft that he stayed at is only a few hundred meters from the stone, and it is likely that he had established a relationship to that place and the stone, and the paintings are proving that (Jamajärvi 1889, Erämaa järvi 1892, Kullervo's Curse 1899).

Nonetheless, the textual sources dealing with the painting have little knowledge about the stone. Therefore, Axel Gallén remains as the main source of information. The process of making the painting took fifteen years, and the insight lies within the artist. However, without him we would not know about the stone. What the attachment to the Kullervo's saga has brought is a heavy load to carry that the stone does not necessarily deserve. Nevertheless, it continues to be a special stone and its re-emergence shows that it has something to tell.

In order to be able to hear the story, the connection was established through presence during the visits and deepened with the help of the seeress. Prior to the third visit, I conducted a cleansing to enhanced my body's perceptive abilities, tuning the tool and be on asimilar frequency as the stone.

The initial intent was to remove the stone from its environment and place it in a museum for some time period, which would have been an aggressive act. It would have been consequential, the long continuum of connectivity broken and the story connected to the location would have been lost.

My act would have turned the stone into a commodity, an art object, and the understanding of its real value would not be found. What made me change the focus was meeting the stone, and later I understood the one-sidedness of my attitude. As a result, the focus of the project was altered, with new aims to give the stone a voice and learn from it. – I am sure that my first intention was sensed and had its consequences when attempting to establish a dialogue.

Now, it has been three years that I have known the stone. The ongoing process has brought me comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the stone. Thus, what is the stone telling, then?

There is no easy narration to be read, and communication with the stone proved to be complex. It took place and appeared in unexpected ways, including dreams, reading signs concerning the environment and weather as well intuitive feelings and sensations. However, there is no set of guidelines how this could be done, therefore all things could have meaning. With this notion I faced the challenge of making sense out of all this and forming a sort of story out of it.

The messages are combinations of little pieces of information learned during this process, from physical engagements, experiences, planning, acting, actions, reading, drawing, writing reports, and photographing. The idea that sensing vibrations and resonance could form an exchange of emotions and feeling, is possible and seen in hormonal communication of some life forms. I am open to all different kinds of processes and methods, and I believe that they could lead towards cognition and a comprehensive understanding.

To start, communicating is not complicated. What is needed is to be open minded; give your presence and enough time and nature takes it from there. After all, everything here is made from the same material and energy, we are just in different states and shapes in different times.

The starting point for this project was when I came across two images next to each other in a book I was reading due to my interest in landscape and nature. As the title of the book indicates: *Know the Landscape / Tunne Maisema*, is what drives me to different places. I want to engage, be immersed, feel, sense, and learn. Is it a place or an object or a phenomenon? It does not matter unless the learning goes through my body and turns into an experience.

To give a voice to the stone. I am used to convey what the stone wants to tell us. – It is the stone that is talking through me.

Interpreting the Stone

The dialogue with the stone has brought me a picture of the stone's perspective. First I would like to suggest that the attachment to the Kullervo's tragic story in Kalevala has been a heavy load for the stone. As I understand it, the stone and its animistic inhabitant have nothing to do with the fate of Kullervo. They merely hold an association to the heathen past of the Finnish people, created by Axel Gallén.

Drawing a connecting line between the three locations creates a story: The 'Arrow' from Saana mountain resembles an iron tool to create sparks as well as the hammer of Thor, Ukko's thunder, which when in contact with the white stone milky quartz (called in Finnish: Ukonkivi that conceals the knowledge) causes sparks that create life and culture on mother earth –which was my finding from Pyhä. The sparks caused by the forceful hit of the spike to the quartz sends sparks to the lands where culture flourishes –a spark of life with heavenly origin, that is the stone.

This mythological interpretation follows a similar pattern as the runes that describe the origin of iron and fire as well as the wellbeing and creation myths found in folklore. Due to the intuitive connections and stories that I have made, what is the stone trying to tell us, or is this all coming from my imagination?

Did the method work?

The method helped me answer the research question, and furthermore it highlighted important contemporary issues that need addressing for a common good. Therefore, I can conclude that the method worked.

The aim was to seek understanding and create meanings rather than objective information. Subjective research is bound to its maker, therefore all works, from artworks to writings, manifest the individual maker. What affects the validity of the outcomes is the level of commitment and how deep the topic is excavated. That is to say, the interpretative outcomes are imaginative, and the freedom that the faculty of arts provides is used.

To conclude, the chosen methods not only answered the questions, it opened new perspectives concerning the painting and the artist.

Value – for whom?

This thesis presents my learnings and practice and is also part of the degree requirements. Therefore, my primary audience is the faculty of Arts.

The stone project is an open-ended process that is open to new interpretations and research in the future. Axel Gallén created meaning and value for the stone by attaching it to Kalevala. And now I have created a new layer through research, interpretation, and reflection. This means that it is open to new interpretations by someone else. I see this as a continuous circle in which different people from different times could participate.

The value of this project for me has been corporeal, not only changing how I treat my body but also reconnecting with the environment and nature with a more considerate stance. Moreover, I learned about the issue of subjective knowledge within the academic/science context and how pragmatic philosophy could help change views. (Varela)

What comes to understanding my own practice and the processes the thesis has drawn together what I have learned during the studies and the personal preferences in a form that I could articulate and present them.

The project has not only created value for the community of practice by opening new research perspectives, it also shows examples of how to engage with nature, stones, or other things by just listening and being present. whole process and correlates with the narration that has been created.

Strengths and Limitations

For criticism, the validity of the research can be questioned if taking a stance from an objective perspective, however, the research was not aimed at producing measurable information. Furthermore, the research on the stone project used intuitive interpretations to escalate an understanding of different perspectives.

How does one validate a metaphysical phenomenon that is subjectively experienced? If not even considered, then a counter question can be asked, what could an objective perspective offer as explanation for such experienced phenomena? However, the subjective insight of experiences and other intuitiveness should be questioned, as that is an integral part of producing knowledge and validating it.

Although I take my stand firmly on the subjective side, that does not prevent the use of objective methods and tools in my research. Hence, if the interpretation is drawn from understanding backed by extensive studies and multiple perspectives of the subject, then I assert that the interpretations could be validated. I consider my understanding and knowledge in connection to this project to have reached a level where my findings could be valued.

Future Research Directions

Preferable continuity for this project would include an action that would clarify the stone's status and its location. I see that it could be worked within the reverberation of this project through collaboration with locals, institutions, and publicity.

Conclusion

To conclude my findings about the stone in relation to the painting: the stone manifests the knowledge from the past in reference of the marriage of the heathen god of the skies and the mother earth. The findings of the animistic being that occupies the stone represents the mother earth in this context. Similarly Axel Gallén had an idea of the exceptionality of the stone, and he attempted to capture the stone's 'spirit' in the painting as a symbolical reference.

in the process of creating a new narrative as well as finding answers to my questions I have gained understanding of how communication with the natural world can be established. This includes enhancing one's bodily sensitiveness and wellbeing as well as giving time and presence to the subject that one wants to understand. However, this requires discarding the nihilist objectivity.

The method chosen for the research has given me an understanding of multiple aspects as well as answered the initial question. Therefore the qualitative research combining methods from practice-based somatic engagements and literary analysis worked within this project. Both were art-driven approaches, as the literary was partly based on art history and the practice-based was firmly anchored in post-modern art that qualifies art as experience.

As my project turned into a multidimensional practice-based process, which itself can be defined as art, I still wanted to contribute a visual presentation that summarises the whole project: a photograph of the stone-being.

Does this thesis add value for the Arts in an academic context? That is not in my power to choose, but at least it presented new findings and perspectives in connection to the painter and the painting. Art includes telling stories and narration, and in that sense this is also art that also reflects crucial contemporary topics. Furthermore, by creating new narration for the stone it also opens up the stone for yet another interpretation or actions by someone else.

So, what was the stone telling me then? Perhaps a story of human culture and its decline. Or maybe the stone used me as a medium for its own purposes that are yet to be seen. Maybe the stone was calling me all along and this was meant to happen?

“If you don’t believe me, ” says the stone,
“just ask the leaf, it will tell you the same.
Ask a drop of water, it will tell you what the leaf has said.
And, finally, ask a hair from your own head.
I am bursting with laughter, yes, vast laughter,
although I don’t know how to laugh.”

I knock at the stone’s front door.
“It’s only me, let me come in.”

“I don’t have a door, ” says the stone.

– Wislawa Szymborska, *Conversation with a Stone*, 1962.

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